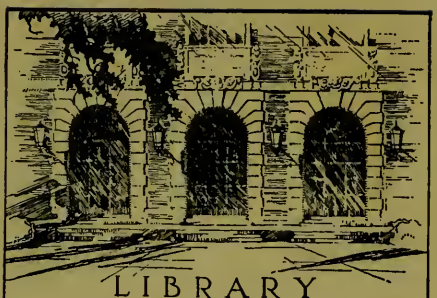

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MAYFAIR TO MILLBANK.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

RICHARD HARRIS,

Author of "New Nobility," &c.

VOL. I.

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MAYFAIR TO MILLBANK.

CHAPTER I.

MONEY OR LOVE.

"Words! and what are words?" said Edgar Hindly. "I have promised to marry her, it is true; but the value of a promise in these matters, according to the world's estimation, is but as a feather in the air; the current of circumstances will govern, not be controlled by it. And yet—yet—I love her, and she is lovely, loveable and true: the proudest peeress has not a fairer form or a nobler soul; heaven

is in her face and God in her heart. But she is the child of those whom my family would despise; I should be called fool were I to marry her. Love and Fortune are once more at variance, and on the battle ground of my own heart must the conflict rage; dire must be the struggle, but—" The young man left the sentence unfinished, and resting his head on his hand, seemed to yield to the conflict of emotions that tortured him; his eyes assumed that glassy, vacant stare which tells that the soul is wandering from the confines of reason and losing itself in the regions of fancy.

His reverie was disturbed by a slight knock at the door, which was immediately followed by the entrance of Job Hawkins, an intimate companion.

"Well, old fellow," said the visitor, "you think rather loudly—what's up now?"

Edgar smiled, but so faintly that it scarcely indicated any pleasurable emotion.

"Nothing," he answered.

"You ought to be the happiest fellow in the

world," said Job; "a pretty girl and six thousand a year is not so ridiculous a thing for a fellow to begin life with—besides, it will just set you right; clear off your liabilities, save the old family crib, and keep the ghosts of your ancestors in their respective hemispheres."

Edgar drank a glass of wine without making any reply. Every word of Job was a dart which seemed to prick his brain.

"Help yourself," he said.

"But what ails you, Edgar? this last month you have not been the same fellow. I suppose you worry about the old trees you sold—but you know the saying about timber and heirs."

"Hang the timber," said Edgar; "I wish it had been ten times as much, depend upon it I would have shaved the old park as bare as it is at this day. I'm not such a fool as to regard a few sticks in any such serious light."

"Well, you're a riddle I shan't try to guess any longer," said Job, who was burning all the while to unmask his companion.

"Drink your wine," said Edgar.

And they both drank; for it was far from the inclination of Job to disobey any such command, especially on the present occasion, when he knew that it would, in all probability, enable him to extract from his companion the secret of his peculiar demeanour.

"Well," said Edgar, after another interval of silence, "I believe you would help a fellow if you could, Job."

Job laughed as he turned the glass between his fingers and sipped the costly beverage which it contained; he knew his man pretty well, for he had often dealt with him on difficult grounds, and he felt that, if need be, he could almost extract a tooth from him, to say nothing of a secret.

"I believe you have known me long enough to trust me," said Job; "but if you cannot, don't tell me your troubles, for it's no part of my business to pry into a fellow's secrets."

Edgar sighed, but it was very slightly, so

slightly that it was rather an effort to suppress emotion than a voluntary betrayal of it.

"You know, Job," he began, "I'm in an uncomfortable plight; you have heard of course of my intended marriage with Lucy Walters?"

"Not a very uncomfortable plight that," said Job.

"Stay a moment," continued Edgar, "perhaps you know also of a certain Lizzy Wilmington, who lives near Raymond Park."

"Lizzy Wilmington," said Job, thoughtfully, and with some attempt at concealment of his knowledge.

"Come, Job, that will not do," said Edgar; "your memory must be particularly treacherous just now if you have no recollection of last May's picnic, when—"

"O, you mean her, do you?" said Job, "exactly; but the deuce, you have no obstacle in that quarter, surely. She's pretty enough it's true, and I remember well with what envy the ladies regarded her—that was a strange vagary!"

"Strange enough, I grant you," replied Edgar;

"but you know I was always fond of romance, and that was just the incident to delight me."

"Well, but you are not surely in love with the daughter of a—what the deuce is she?—ha! ha! that's romance if you like."

"Look, Job, I have promised her marriage; and the fact is I would not for a hundred Lucy Walters discard that girl—she's a very princess in disguise."

"My dear fellow," said Job, "I'd give my right hand to relieve you of the good fortune that looks upon you through the eyes of Lucy Walters. You're about the luckiest fellow in the world, and the blindest. The idea of Lizzy Wilmington casting a shadow upon such a prospect; why it's the very thing you want, the only means in the world to save you from downright ruin. The fact is, Hindley, you must have her if it's only for her money."

Edgar shook his head and sipped his wine.

"But for that accursed Jew," said he, "I should have been happy and independent."

"And now," said Job, "you are the envy of

one half the county and the admiration of the other; but be as it may between you and Lizzy, affairs stand thus—we owe four thousand to Scraggs, twenty bills of five hundred each are due sometime within the next month, and the bill of foreclosure has just another six weeks to run—and, depend upon it, Solomon is not the man to extend the time willingly."

"I know it," said Edgar; "he is a scamp."

"What is to be done, then?—fortune opens a door for your escape, and one wide enough to take Raymond Park through with you. The fact is you *must* have Lucy."

"But it doesn't follow that I shall have the handling of her money to such an extent that I am to spend it all the first year in liquidating my debts."

"Marry her," said Job, "and chance the rest; at present no one but myself and our creditors know how we stand. Old Walters thinks you as rich as Crœsus, and the surprise to the old boy after your marriage when he discovers

his mistake will help you amazingly, for it's ten to one that a stroke of apoplexy will finish his anxiety in the matter before he has time to send for his lawyer and tie up the remainder of his wealth: it's capital, capital, I think."

"I couldn't act so diabolically," said Edgar; "honour would compel me to lay all my circumstances before him."

Job laughed heartily as he replenished his glass.

"I fear, my friend, it's too late for you and me to study honour, with some score of bills staring us in the face to the tune of ten thousand pounds; but for my own part I don't care a jot. I shall just renew mine as they fall due, and let old Solomon in for it at last."

"But how?" asked Edgar. "You have no more securities, and it seems to me that your governor has already a suspicion that you are not the steadiest fellow in the world: and he must possess a pretty full chest if you have not almost exhausted your share of the booty."

Job winked and gave a slight toss of the head.

"I have no misgivings on that score," said he. "Necessity, you know, is the mother of a very clever daughter, and so long as I belong to the family I shall ensure the service of this very useful handmaid."

"Well, you are a strange fellow, Job, and the most admirable schemer in the world. You scheme into debt and then scheme out of it. But with all your talent for surmounting obstacles, you don't offer me any advice respecting my own dilemma."

"I ought to have Job's patience as well as his name," said Hawkins, "to bear with you while you talk at such a rate. Your only dilemma is that you are asked to marry an heiress."

"No, no, Job," answered Edgar, "my dilemma is that it would be to my interest to do so, nay, that I am pledged to do so, and at the same time I am bound in honour to fulfil my promise to another."

"And she penniless," said Job. "Well, then,

being thus foolishly pledged to both, as you term it, the question is, which pledge you shall dispense with? Which is most to your advantage to redeem? For my part, my resolve would soon be taken. Beauty's but the blush of the morning, and soon fades away; so if you love poverty because it happens to be beautiful, you will have to bear its inconvenience and its stigma when its charms are gone. Now, I grant you the money of even Lucy Walters would terribly shrink when it came in contact with old Solomon; but then it would redeem 'Raymond,' it would keep you clear of old Scraggs, and by careful speculation you might recover with it a great deal of what is lost."

"It is impossible to give her up," said Edgar, more to himself than to Job, who was anxiously watching every change of his friend's countenance, as he endeavoured, by circuitous approaches, to get at the secret which was half betrayed by the careful language of Edgar.

"Impossible to give up Lucy?" Job replied,

"impossible, unless you are downright mad. What in the name of Fortune should you scruple about? Why, its reported that the wedding-day is fixed for the sixteenth."

"It cannot be," said Edgar, in a tone which showed too plainly the deep emotion of his heart, and the struggle that was at that moment tormenting him; "the wine is with you, Job."

Job filled again, and looked triumphantly at Edgar's unutterably demure aspect; but with all Job's powers of penetration, he failed to discover the secret which he felt was hidden beneath the apparent confidence of his friend.

"Look," said Edgar, as Job rose to depart, "it is utterly impossible for me to marry Lucy, unless Lizzy—" he paused.

"Lizzy what?" said Job, "consents?"

Edgar's brain reeled.

"Keep the matter quiet, Job. If the wedding must come off it must; but to tell you the truth I would rather have half the money without the daughter, than all the money with; and in fact I

am determined to have Lizzy, come of it what may."

"But I suppose you will send her to school," suggested Job; "hardly the thing you know now a days to have a girl who can neither play nor speak anything but plain English. However, that's for your consideration, not mine. I merely throw it out by way of suggestion, with the familiarity of an old friend. Good night—good night."

"It was exceedingly like Job, that," thought Edgar, as he flung himself into his easy chair; "he's an ingenious dog. The idea will do. Lizzy must be sent to France for her education; but yet the difficulty grows greater as I proceed. The remedy will not cure the disease of this cursed misplaced passion; Beauty, thou art poison, and love, with all thy sentiment and ecstasy, thou art but madness after all!"

CHAPTER II.

THE HAWKINSES.

When Job Hawkins took his departure, he felt an unusual degree of satisfaction, as he complimented himself upon the happy knack which he possessed of "drawing out" his friend. Job was a man of the world, and before proceeding further, it may be desirable to give some information respecting this gentleman's origin, character, and breeding.

Job was the son of a miser, or rather of a person who had made an immense deal of money by

some extraordinary method or other—for to say that ordinary means would lift a man from beggary, and in a few years set him among the wealthiest citizens of the metropolis, would be to utter a sheer absurdity. It may have been that the older Hawkins was a successful speculator; at all events he was a successful trader of some kind. His ostensible occupation had been that of an iron founder, and "the foundry," was the common description of his town establishment, although the premises indicated by that term were not of such dimensions as those usually devoted to that kind of business. The foundry was on a small scale; but it was evidently large enough for the purposes of the elder Hawkins, as was manifest from the rapidity with which he rose in the social scale; in a few years he had become one of the richest men in the city. Streets were called by his name, and he was the owner of them; estates in the country were purchased, and first a suburban villa, then a country mansion, was the residence of the

wealthy "merchant;" such was the addition which the old man was pleased to append to his name. Few cared to inquire what merchant he was, for he was a merchant prince, as all might see who would take the trouble to observe the splendour of his home and the magnificence of the estates he purchased from time to time.

I have said that Hawkins was a miser, and strange as the term may seem when contrasted with the latter part of my description, it will appear more clearly from a further examination of the old man's character. He had been reared in obscurity and penury. The habits he had contracted in that position clung to him through life. His wealth had come upon him so fast that he was absolutely rich, even while he believed himself to be struggling for a living. His tastes were inexpensive; his habits penurious, and his disposition niggardly. He was, in fact, a man determined to make money, and not to spend it. Therefore the saving, careful, economical tradesman who intended to be rich at the expense of

much self-sacrifice, gradually grew into the grasping, miserly, avaricious merchant, whose great aim was to augment his wealth by the very same means he had employed to obtain it. He had been the architect of his own fortune, but, substantially as he had built it, he was afraid to take away the scaffolding for fear it should fall. So old Hawkins lived in the mansion of a gentleman with the parsimony of a beggar.

But as children grew up it was apparent to the merchant that they must move in a different circle from that in which he had been accustomed to perform his daily course; there was a very indistinct notion as to what the precise extent of this enlarged circle should be. I will, therefore, dwell for a moment on the course of life he had marked out for the one with whose history we shall be more intimately acquainted by and bye.

Poor Job, though ignorant of the fact, came into the world with the punishment of the law upon his head—shame that it could be so; and as the youth expanded from a clever boy into

a promising, shrewd, ambitious man, his keen eye very soon wandered over the expanse of his father's estates. The determination he came to from this survey was that he must sweep away the foundry, with all its connections, and betake himself to the task of completing the work which his father had so substantially begun. The youth's designs were worthy the ambition that prompted, and the object that invited them. There was wealth enough, evidently, to buy half the rotten boroughs in the kingdom, whenever he should be sufficiently advanced in years and position to make the purchase. Job thought it was desirable to obtain a certain *status*; for his father, with all his wealth, could never impart that; he was therefore articled to the law.

As the elder Hawkins observed the developing ability of his son, he was not altogether blind to his youthful ambition. Job already talked like a lawyer, and the clever manner in which he began to enquire into the titles of his father's multitudinous estates, pronouncing this good; that

secure; a third good to hold, but bad to sell; and a fourth clearly bad, convinced the old man that *the boy*, as he was wont to term him, possessed a marvellous ability for the profession he had chosen, and would one day make a splendid conveyancer; that was, supposing he devoted himself to that branch of legal study; for even illiterate old Hawkins knew something of the fact that conveyancing was an important branch of the profession, and required considerable skill. It was the old man's delight of a winter evening to smoke his long churchwarden pipe, and contemplate the assiduous Job as he perused the various parchments which were exhumed from the old iron chest for the purpose of improving the boy's mind, and familiarising it with the mouldy technicalities of the conveyancer's art; and it was a moment of exultation when he heard him expatiate upon the validity of the different documents presented to him. Bed time often came before the learned and learning Job could be prevailed upon to postpone his studies till the fol-

lowing evening. Then there was the careful arrangement of the discoloured mass of parchments; the separate packets being carefully tied up in their brown-paper wrappers, and replaced in the gigantic box.

By these means Job certainly acquired a great deal of knowledge, which he will probably turn to practical account by and bye; and, moreover, the aspiring student obtained a complete acquaintance with his father's estates. Better than the old man knew his wealth, was it known to Master Job; and as he began to understand the value of money, and the exact relationship which existed between mortgagors and mortgagees, the thought sometimes crossed his mind as to the enormous amount of money which might be raised by means of mere mortgages, if "the old man chose." Why the thought should have occurred to him it is not quite easy to say. He never heard or suspected that his sire wanted money; indeed, he knew that he did not; that is to say, his requirements were bounded by the phrase that

he only wanted as much as he could get. But as the principles of mortgaging unfolded themselves to Job's comprehensive mind, the whole process expanded into a science which more and more impressed him with admiration of the stupendous wisdom of the law. It was wonderful to think that some twenty thousand pounds might be raised, for instance, upon the "Hawkins Park Estate," without so much as damaging it, without felling a stick of timber, or injuring a blade of grass; and, one evening as he was walking from his office to "The Place," smoking his cigar, he almost reasoned himself into the belief that the old man was a great fool for not mortgaging; and he certainly appeared to Job's mind, to partake of the disposition of that familiar quadruped, "the dog in the manger;" he (I mean Hawkins) would neither mortgage himself nor let anyone else mortgage. I am not quite sure as to whether the young and inexperienced student really meant what he thought; but this he did mean, that "the governor" was a deucedly

rich old fellow, had got more estates than he could manage, and might as well let him manage them for him. Job was certain he could make more of them, and while he would be able to put more money into his governor's pocket he would at the same time put a little into his own. So when he arrived at "The Place," and in the course of his usual studies was examining minutely the title of "the Malvern estate," which consisted of some seventy houses of small and large dimensions, the young man commenced with sundry indirect allusions to the pecuniary relationship which existed between the landlord and his tenantry.

"Do you know, governor," remarked Job, "I think this estate is capable of wonderful improvement."

"Perhaps so, boy," said the old man, "but we might get worse tenants."

"And you might get better," replied Job, "or if you don't get better, you might make these present ones an infinitely deal better than they are."

"How so, boy?"

"By making them pay more rent," said Job. "And then, again, old Piglead, your confidential agent, is drawing a good round dividend from them all—subtracting from their proceeds. Wants managing, governor—wants managing."

The elder Hawkins puffed a large cloud from his sealing-waxed churchwarden, and looked towards the window at an angle of about forty-five. Then he turned his glance upon "the boy," who was eyeing him with profound thought.

"You may be right, boy," said Hawkins, "but I can't do these things myself, you know, and there is no one in whom I can place confidence as I can in Piglead."

"Not in me, I suppose?" said Job.

"As for that, boy, you know I have always believed in you as my right hand."

"I could manage these things in a better manner," said Job, "because I should take an interest in it. As for Piglead, he only applies

himself to the task for the commission he gets. I would do it without any commission at all."

"You're a brave boy," said the old man, "but you know your studies must be looked to. I want you to make a man."

"A man!" said Job. "And how many years after twenty-one does it take to accomplish that little business?"

"Twenty-one!" said the old man, and a sigh came forth with the tobacco smoke.

"I believe I was twenty-one the day before yesterday," said Job, "at least, mother told me it was so, and the family Bible thus registers it."

"The first time I knew there were two Jobs in the Bible," said Hawkins.

"And for aught I know," answered the son, "I think they are equally patient; for my namesake never knew what it was to exist in professional life on two pounds a week."

"Two pounds a week, Job!" exclaimed the old miser. "Must not have too grand ideas, Job, before thee canst realise them."

"But I don't grumble, sir," replied Job. "I never did grumble, did I?"

"No, Job; wast always a good boy enough; and too much money's a temptation."

And Job thought the want of it was a temptation too.

"Well, look you," said the old man, "I dare say you do want a little more now, if you're twenty-one."

"If twenty-one has anything to do with it," answered Job, "I am sure I do; but it's not my affairs that I wish to speak of; my interest is, of course, entwined with yours, and I don't ask a farthing for any services I perform for you."

"Wast always a good boy," said the old man, "and I know what boys are before they're twenty one—can't keep them out o' the sweet shops."

Whether old Hawkins was speaking in jest or earnest it is impossible to say, but if he had thoroughly known the character of the boy he would have been inclined to doubt whether

the young gentleman's later propensities had been for lollipops and sugar candy.

After some further conversation it was agreed that Job was to try his hand on the management of the Malvern estate, and if he succeeded in increasing the revenues he was ultimately to be entrusted with the whole of the estates. The old man was delighted with the thought that his income would be augmented, while Job was convinced that under his careful management he could make it ten times more available either for leaseholds, mortgages, or absolute sales. In Job's legal mind it was wonderful how many different kinds of estates and interests he could carve out of the original fee-simple, without in the least involving his father in difficulties—in fact there was no difficulty in the whole thing, with the exception of obtaining his father's signature to a document which he drew up that night at his obscure lodgings. The old man's liberality was evinced by his voluntarily offering Job an addition of ten shillings to his weekly pittance, for the trouble

of managing seventy houses, which offer the magnanimous son declined, affirming that he had no intention of being a paid agent of his own father, although if he pleased to consider his position and income he might make him any further allowance independently of the agency, which he thought he could afford. In plain terms Job would accept a hundred or five hundred a year as a gentleman from his governor, but he would not condescend to receive a single shilling as his agent.

"Wast always a good boy, Job," said the old man, as he shook his dutiful son by the hand and wished him good night.

CHAPTER III.

SCHEMING.

One more chapter in Job. The first consideration that entered the mind of the young lawyer naturally was the course to be adopted in order to render his new appointment as profitable as possible. To solve this problem, three things were necessary, a comfortable fire, a good cigar, and a tolerably strong glass of grog.

A few puffs diffused a goodly and fragrant cloud, into which Job's eyes wandered, now partially closed, now dilated, as though he was care-

fully endeavouring to get the proper focus, a proper focus being necessary in order to see distinctly and understand clearly the subtile visions which fashion themselves upon that transient background.

"Let me see," he began, "I owe that confounded Gregory two thousand pounds, with interest at six per cent.; that is not so much. I owe about—about two—say three hundred to Snipp and Buckrum; that is not a great deal. Three bills fall due next week of a thousand each; they must be met, even if Snipp and Buckrum wait a little longer, which they will be very happy to do if I give them another substantial order. Gregory won't mind waiting either, especially if I borrow another thousand at increased interest, and give him real security. By Jove! this is the luckiest thing in the world; fancy the governor falling so readily into my views—capital—now then; suppose I borrow from old Gregory enough to clear off—say twelve thousand—but stop — twelve thousand, which

estate will do it? I can mortgage the Renfrew farms, the only available ones, I think, at present. Very well, there's no harm in mortgaging, that's clear, because it doesn't injure the estate;" (another puff or two and then a repetition) "it doesn't injure the estate—it doesn't injure the old man—and, it doesn't injure me. I'm sure it won't injure Gregory. Now the rents—let me see—let me see; the rents—the rents of those two farms are only five hundred a year—no one will advance twelve thousand on securities that only produce five hundred a year. That's a bad job, but then the farms are *worth* more. I might make new leases" (Job's eyes brightened and he sipped again), "that is, I might obtain copies of the present ones, and merely alter the dates and rentals so as to make these money-lending dogs believe what *is* really true. There's no harm, surely, in making one believe the truth—it won't harm the lender, because he will have security for his money; it won't harm the old man, because he will get just the same rents; it won't harm the tenants, because they will pay no

more than they do now; and it won't harm me. But stop—how shall I manage it? First get the counterparts, then get similar ones engrossed with increased rentals, and then—the signatures —that's the—" Job came to a pause, and slowly rising from his seat, wandered meditatively across the chamber to his book-shelves, glanced his eye along the familiar volumes till it rested on "Roscoe's Criminal Law," withdrew it from the shelf, and sauntered back to his chair. His next business was to scan the index, and having found the word "Forgery," referred to the page which treated of that offence. "Forgery," he muttered, "here it is—hem—legally then, I suppose it would be forgery; but as it injures no one, I can't see that it is moral forgery; and the fact is, I don't care much whether it is or not, it's no use to have over nice scruples in a matter of this sort; to forge the name of my Lord Duke might be something serious (although I shouldn't stand much about that); but to imitate the handwriting, and the plebeian name of a west-country farmer, is no great matter—at all events,

I don't care a great deal whether it is or not. I mean to injure no one—it's merely for security—"

He paused again, as if to reconnoitre. What he wanted was to raise money by mortgage of this property. How was he, the mere manager of the estate, to mortgage it?

It took another cigar and a somewhat stronger glass of grog to accomplish this, but Job was equal to the task.

"Now, then, a deed of gift from the governor to me would do it all; but if I get the draught drawn Gregory will not prepare the deed without authority from the governor, at least he'd be an ass if he did. I think I've sufficiently proved that there's no harm in mortgaging; if not, there's no harm in taking the means to that end. A letter from my father to Gregory would do the trick,—instruct him to prepare a deed of gift of the Renfrew estates to me in fee, that will do; not that I mean to commit an act of fraud. Heaven forbid! No such evil intent belongs to Job; in fact, the governor might rather approve

of it for aught I know. However, I won't chance that, but I'll have the letter ready. I dare say the governor wouldn't mind my using his name; in fact, I'm sure he wouldn't, so I need not trouble myself about that either. The whole contrivance, then, is simply this, a letter from the governor to Gregory instructing him to give me the property—that is, to prepare a deed of conveyance for that purpose. All that I shall have to do will be to write my father's name to these instructions; and I pledge my honour that I'll do it so neatly that the old boy shall never have occasion to blame me for a bad imitation. '*Wast always a good boy, Job,*' is what he says, so here's to his jolly good health."

Thus saying, for Job finished his meditations by uttering the last sentence aloud, the "good boy" emptied his glass and retired to his bed.

It is on the night after this important mental debate that my first chapter introduces Job to the reader in company with Edgar Hindly.

CHAPTER IV.

A WORTHY ACQUAINTANCE.

It was Job's policy to marry his friend to Lucy Walters, but he knew that his plans would be frustrated if Lizzy were permitted to stand in the way of so advantageous an alliance. The fact that Edgar entertained no affection for the heiress was rather to his own advantage than otherwise; for the probability was that the young husband would have less scruples about availing himself of his wife's property; and her influence over him would be proportionately decreased.

In the multifarious dealings in which Edgar and the youthful lawyer had been engaged, it will hardly appear mysterious if the latter had exerted the cunning of his profession in involving his friend in difficulties to a far greater extent than he was aware of; so that while Messrs. Edgar and Job appeared to be entangled in the meshes of inextricable insolvency, and while they both seemed to be equally indebted to sundry bill discounters and money lenders, the truth was that Job was rather a creditor of Edgar than a co-debtor. He had acted as an agent of Solomon and others. They all fished in the same stream, but while Job held the rod the crafty Jew plyed the landing-net. It is doubtful, however, whether the cunning of the lawyer was not a full match for that of the host of bill-brokers and money-mongers with whom he had to do. The honourable profession which old Hawkins had given his son, the latter on all occasions determined, if possible, to turn to good account; consequently, while he was the willing instrument of

Solomon, and while Solomon chuckled over the manner in which he employed his agent, lending him freely on post-obits and other securities, the intention of Job was not to pay a single farthing of all he ever borrowed, and at the same time to obtain as much as possible of the game which he was so assiduously driving into their capacious nets.

There was a little back parlour in Solomon's dingy house where a good deal of business had been done in his lifetime as well as in that of his father. It was the depository of the title deeds of many a fair estate in "merrie England;" for Solomon had been a useful man in his time in helping fellows out of difficulties; when all other friends failed there was a sure one in him; he had been Job's comforter in many a disconsolate hour of that young gentleman's career. Solomon had known the elder Hawkins from his boyhood; they had played together, and it was hardly likely that he would neglect the son of his early friend.

"Boys must have money," the old man would say, whenever Job went to him, and he was never contradicted on this point.

A few nights after the interview between Hindly and his friend Job, the latter wended his way to the narrow street in which Solomon's house was situated. A light tap at the door aroused the only inmate, the veritable Solomon himself, who shuffled along the dark passage with a feeble, flickering candle in one hand and a good sized horse pistol in the other; this observation was made through the keyhole, and the young man burst into a hearty laugh, which was scarcely suppressed by the time Solomon reached the door.

A croaking, husky voice demanded who was there; but Job had hardly yet sufficiently composed himself to reply. A perfect stillness succeeded for a minute, and then there was a sound, a very unmistakable one, of the clicking of a pistol lock.

"Who's there, I say?" again enquired the money-lender.

"All right," responded Job.

"Who?"

"Mr. Hawkins."

"Beg your par*don*, sir," said Solomon; "in one moment—just allow me—"

The conclusion of the sentence, however, was inaudible, for the old man had retreated from the door, and as he returned, a short time after, without the formidable weapon, it was evident that the "just allow me" had reference to the concealment of that unfriendly instrument. There was a rattling of heavy chains and a scrooping of bolts, then a pull at the massy door, which for awhile resisted the strength of Solomon.

"Allow me," said Job, and before the money-lender could step aside, the force with which Mr. Hawkins applied his foot to the obdurate oak caused it to fly back upon the worthy Solomon and send him reeling down the passage.

However, if his words were to be relied on, it was "all right," and Job stepped into the deso-

late mansion. Bolts, chains, and bars were again adjusted, and the two men were soon seated before a very meagre fire in a little room, which was called an office.

Solomon slightly hemmed, like a very diffident speaker after he has got so far in his intended oration as "Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen."

Job poked the fire, more, it seemed, by way of diversion than for any real purpose it served or was intended to serve, for the exhausted cinders were in a most unenviable mood of utter despondency.

The little gleaming eyes of Solomon pierced into those of Job, then examined carefully his face, but he said nothing. Each was waiting for the other to begin.

"How's father, Mr. Hawkins?" enquired Solomon.

"Pretty well, thank you," answered Job, "except that a stiffish stroke of apoplexy has somewhat unsettled him this last day or two."

"Apoplexy!" exclaimed Solomon. "You

don't mean that, sare. Poor fellow! poor fellow!"

"Oh, it was nothing," said Job; "you know he's subject to that sort of thing."

"Subject!" answered Solomon. "Why, I never heard of anybody having more than three."

"I see," said Job, "you adhere to the old theory of one, two, three, and away! The fact is, the governor's had two, and is 'as hearty as a buck.'"

"Vary shorry," said Solomon. "I would go and shee him, but you know how difficult it is for me to leave bushinesh—bushinesh, you know, ish bushinesh."

"He sees nobody," said Job, "except that old confidential fellow of his, Piglead."

"Of coursh," said Solomon, with exquisite cunning, "his affairsh are all settled. You being in de legal trade you know, of coursh—"

"I am happy to say everything—that is—" Job was rather anxious to pause, but found it

somewhat difficult. "Of course," he added, "everything will be all right; but with such a property there will daily accrue little matters which will require adjustment—and—and—so on—"

"Exactly; but with respect to the bulk of the propertish?"

"That, as a matter of course—but I never interfere—there is nobody else to inherit if we don't; but this I know, I am to have the Renfrew farms."

"Vary happy—*va*ry happy to hear it indeed. Good propertish—let me see, produsb a pretty good income, eh?"

"About twelve hundred a year," said Job."

"Then—"

"But these I am to have immediately. You know the fact is, Solomon, a young fellow entering life must have something to begin on."

"Exactly," said Solomon; "but will you shell? Shupposhe not—mortgage probably—mort*gage?*"

"I should not dare to sell during the governor's life; it would probably cut off my hopes of anything hereafter."

"Jist sho," said Solomon, with a tone and look of disappointment.

"And if he knew I mortgaged it would probably ruin me; must be very careful, you know, Solomon, how I proceed. If I mortgage it must be done very quietly. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, my dear sare, per*fec*tly."

"I presume," continued Job, "you don't want your money? If so, Gregory has a client who will advance me whatever I require on the Renfrew farms; he has now the deed of gift preparing."

"I place every confidensh in you, sare," said Solomon, "and to prove that I do not want the monish, I shall be vary happy to advance on the Renfrew farmsh. Yes, sare."

"We will talk of it by and bye," said Job; "at present I have sufficient."

"Good," said Solomon; "but what might you

think de Renfrew estates to be wort? What are they wort?"

"I should expect them to realise twenty thousand," said Job.

The keen eyes of the old man lit up with eager emotion, and he longed to handle the crackling parchment which represented so much wealth.

"Suppose we have a cigar, Solomon?"

"And a glash of wine, eh?" said the Jew; "some good old shtuff here—good old shtuff, sare."

As he spoke he went to an iron safe and took from it a bottle thickly coated with dust and cobwebs.

"I thought these safes were all filled with deeds," said Job.

"Not all, sare—not all—not all, sare."

The cigars were lighted, and for some time the conversation had reference to the crusted port, upon which Job passed his opinion as profoundly as if he were investigating the title to some newly acquired estate.

CHAPTER V.

FRIENDSHIP AND INTEREST.

It would have been curious to observe the amount of silent cunning which was manifested by the couple who were puffing and sipping in the office of the money-spinning Jew. As an introduction to the unwelcome intelligence which Job had to communicate, he had felt it expedient to preface it by the conversation recorded in the previous chapter; but he had served two purposes at the same time, for while he had inspired Solomon with the idea of his governor's

probable speedy dissolution, he had, to a proportionate degree, flattered his hopes of a quick return of the large advances he had made, with all their multiplied and multiplying interest. Yet, with all his cunning, he hardly knew how to commence his announcement of the fact that Edgar Hindly was likely to forfeit all claim to Raymond Hall by a marriage with a penniless girl. To him only were the limitations of the estate really known, and his uneasiness will the more clearly be explained when it is said that by his instrumentality chiefly, the Jew had been induced to advance his money upon the reversionary interest. To tell the truth, he had himself received one-third of the loan, although Solomon was totally ignorant of the circumstance. Unwilling, however, to lose the confidence of his Jewish friend, he thought it prudent to assume the character of a legal adviser at the same time that he put him on his guard with reference to Hindly's movements. Up to the present moment each was satisfied with the success of the

evening. Solomon exulted in the prospect of the mortgage of the Renfrew estates, and Job was gratified with the success of his scheme of raising at a single stroke sufficient means to meet his pressing liabilities. Whatever might hereafter arise from his extravagant conduct, the disclosure must, at every sacrifice, be postponed until the governor's decease. That event, he knew, would extricate him from his difficulties, and leave a sufficient surplus to commence a new career.

"By-the-bye," said he, carefully scrutinising the countenance of his companion, "I'm afraid Hindly is determined to act the fool."

"In what vay, sir?—in what vay?"

"He is over head and ears in love with that what-is-it's daughter!"

"De devil!" exclaimed Solomon. "Why I tought he was to be married shortly to Mish Valtersh."

"I thought so," aswered Job; "indeed, I hoped so, but I'm afraid—in fact, he swears he will not have her."

The old man drew a long breath, and a pallid hue overspread his cadaverous features.

"He'sh a fool, but—but—I'll have Raymond'sh or te monish—I'll have te monish."

"That, my dear sir, will be impossible."

"Imposhible! I have it in mort*gage*—in mortgage, sir—and I vill sell—I vill *sell*—"

"But it's tied up," said Job; "that is, it's limited over on condition of his marrying anyone except Miss Walters."

"'Pon my soul he ish a villain den; he told me it wash hish. *You* told me it wash hish."

"But I had not the remotest idea of his marrying a girl like that; and, indeed, it was only the other night I ascertained that such was his intention."

A bitter oath burst from the lips of the Jew as he saw the thin tissue of security on which he rested for the sum of several thousand pounds.

"On my sowl he ish a villain—a fool—a—"

"I have told him he is ridiculous," answered Job; "but what is to be done with a love-stricken fellow?"

"Blow his shilly brainsh out. By heaven he sheat me out of twenty shousand pound. I would hang for him—a villainous rash*cal*. Why did he come and borrow monish when he mean to sheat me?"

"I do not think he meant to cheat you," said Job.

"Sheat! then by the holy Abraham what ish it to be called but sheat? A shwindle, a bare-face robbery—the curses of Gomorrah fall on him; but I'll have him, I'll have hish very blood —I shwear it. Do you see thish, Master Job, do you see thish, eh, sir?"

As the infuriated Jew spoke he drew from the drawer of a table near him the formidable pistol. The manner of his handling it was far from agreeable to one in Job's position, for, supposing it to be loaded, which there was every reason to apprehend, there was a very great probability of its contents being discharged in the face of the lawyer. To the question which the Jew put with reference to the visual capabilities of his companion, Job replied in the affirmative, but,

coolly parrying the threat of violence which seemed to be couched in the interrogation, he requested permission to examine it, observing at the same time upon the apparent antiquity of the article.

"By Abraham, and by Isaac, and by Jacob, I shwear to have my revensh, or my monish," said Solomon; "a dog villain to rob a poor old man like me!—a poor old honesht man!"

"My dear sir," said Job, "let us look the matter in the face, and perhaps it is not so ugly shaped as the shadow it casts. We don't know that Hindly will marry her, and we are not sure that he will not marry Miss Walters—for my own part I am inclined to think he'll have both."

"Bote!" exclaimed the Jew, "how can he have bote?—how can he?"

"You see he's in a great fix; if he do not have the heiress he will lose her money and his own too."

"And *mine*, too," shrieked Solomon—"and mine, *mine*."

"How much does he owe you?" asked Job.

"Owe! many shousand pound wish interesht."

"Look," said Job, "I suppose you wouldn't feel disposed to advance another thousand or two."

"To that villain thief? I would shooner put thish pishtol into my mout."

"You had better put it into the drawer," said Job, "and let us have just another of your old crusted, and then we'll talk this matter over coolly. You know I always managed matters for you with pretty good success, and I don't know but what we may overcome this difficulty if we try—the fact is I like difficulties, for there's—"

"I *don't*," said Solomon, angrily, "I don't, *dam* if I do."

"There's always a pleasure," continued Job, "in fighting one's way through them. Now, you are aware, perhaps—or perhaps you are not aware—that Hindly has a very fair estate in ——shire."

The Jew's eyes brightened.

"His own!"

"His own, I believe," answered Job; "left him by his maternal grandfather."

"Why, then, did he not mortgage that inshtead of Raymond?"

"Well, I believe it is mortgaged to a slight extent," said Job.

"Sure it ish, a vagabond. Why do you tell me of thish, Master Job—you say it ish mortgaged—what use ish it then to me?"

"I believe there is only a sum of two thousand borrowed on it up to the present time."

"And how moosh ish it wort?"

"Well, you see it's a sort of manor, if not an honor. It's a devil of a great place, I should almost think it's worth fifty thousand pounds!"

"Fifty shousand pounds!"

"At least," replied Job. "Now, what I was thinking was this—suppose you advance a trifle upon it, say ten thousand as second mortgagee—it would be very simple for you to redeem the

first—and then you have the whole estate at your command."

The Jew poured out the rosy fluid at this welcome announcement; but he was hardly satisfied with that portion of the proposition which had reference to the ten thousand pounds.

"You see," continued Job, following up his success, "this little stroke of policy on your part will enable you to bring yourself home to a very great extent."

"But—"

"But," interrupted the lawyer, "you must—it is either that, or take your chance of Hindly's discarding the heiress."

"I will lend no more," said the Jew. "He shall give me the manorsh for my shecurity."

"You have no law to make him," said Job.

"Cursh your laws! they are not made for honesht men. But he will be afraid to refuse me; if I tell the world of him, sare, he'sh a ruin man—a bankrupt—and a shwindler."

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"But then you lose every farthing of your money."

"I will advance one shousand on de manorsh," said the Jew, "not one fardings more, upon my shoul; but I will have de titles investigate. Who hash de mortgage?"

"I don't know," said Job.

"Sure?"

"Sure!" answered the lawyer. "Of course I am sure; last of all on earth, Solomon, would I deceive you. I should as soon think of deceiving my own father."

"I tink I can trush you, Mashter Job; but I know not who elshe."

"Then, I can give you every assurance of the validity of the title to Heathmoor; for instance, if you look to the peerage you will find that the ancestors of Hindly have inherited them for no end of a time: and now to be brief with you—I should advise you to send a competent surveyor down to Heathmoor to see the property."

"The expensh?" said Solomon.

"You will know how to settle that; but let me tell you ten thousand will have to be the advance —remember that; and think yourself lucky to have escaped with such booty as that will ensure you, but for me you would not have had the opportunity of securing yourself, for Gregory has a client who would advance him three times the amount to-morrow morning. I suggested, however, the propriety and the honesty of accepting a smaller sum from you on the ground that he was, in all probability, about to defeat your security of Raymond by a marriage with Lizzy Wilmington."

"Hold him to dat," said Solomon, with a manifestation of avaricious eagerness.

"As long as I can; but there are three bills which fall due next week, and must be met—no time, you know, to scruple upon nice points of honor."

"How moush are de bills?" enquired Solomon.

"A large amount—don't know exactly; say eight thousand."

"I will do 'em for ten, if de title ish good; but I will see—I will see. Can you get de deeds?"

"I believe the mortgagee has them; by the bye, I am not certain—perhaps Hindly himself has them. The amount is so small that I daresay the mortgagee would not press for them, especially if he is a friend of Hindly's; but I will get some of them, say to-morrow night."

"Dat vill do; to-morrow night—to-morrow night. O! dear, dis marriage!"

As Job took his departure, the old man chuckled at the thought of the influence he was exercising over his inexperienced friend; attributing no little of the conquest of that evening to his angry determination and the pistol.

But the thought of Hindly's duplicity rankled in his mind, and a dark, deep, and diabolical plot slowly revolved itself within him as he sat in the gloomy chamber alone by his midnight

taper; such a plot as only a fiend could conceive or execute. A bitter oath, sworn by his remotest ancestor, trembled from his lips as he resolved that Lizzy should not be the wife of Hindly. To remove the possibility of such an event was to secure the sums he had advanced upon Raymond Park, with all their enormous interest; while, if he could only fix his grasp upon the Manor of Heathmoor, he felt that a handsome fortune might be squeezed from it.

Curiously enough, with all his cunning he had not a suspicion of the deeper craft of his friend and instrument. Never was deception more complete than that which the young lawyer was practising. The present scheme was a masterpiece of duplicity, which can only be thoroughly unfolded as the narrative progresses.

CHAPTER VI.

"HIS MAN FRIDAY."

"ANY letters?" enquired Job, as his man Friday opened the door to him, and stood with his teeth chattering with cold.

"Ye-e-s, sir," answered Friday; "there's a p-p-p-p-ar-cel, sir, and—a le-etter."

The name "Friday" may strike the reader as borrowed, and I confess it was. Job was a man who borrowed almost everything he used, and he had christened his eccentric servant from sheer analogy, as he termed

it, between his own circumstances and those of the master of Friday the First. Robinson Crusoe was an adventurer, and so was Job; Robinson was always in difficulties, so was Job; Robinson was inventive, so was Job; Robinson was almost creative, Job was quite so. The only dissimilarity that existed between them, the lawyer maintained was, that, whereas Crusoe was cut off from all his friends, Job was clinging to his with the tenacity of the ivy to the trunk.

It was not every man who would have suited so extraordinary a master; it was not the mere boot polisher, and knife cleaner, and clothes brusher that Job required. Anyone could have taken in his parcels and letters, but everyone could not have taken in his clients. We have heard of a celebrated marquis who, when engaging a valet, deemed it expedient to put the question to him, "Can you fight?" and on being answered with flunkey modesty, "A little, my lord," immediately requested him to put his fists into a pair of boxing gloves, and give his lordship

a specimen of his ability. This, however, was not exactly the qualification which Job required in his valet. First of all, he did not want a person endowed by nature with any extraordinary amount of sagacity; nor one over scrupulous with regard to the difference between yes and no, for Job always maintained that he couldn't depend upon a fellow who couldn't lie. At the same time, he preferred one somewhat honest, that is, as the world employs the term; he didn't want him to be over religious, but he required him at times to accompany him to charitable and philanthropic meetings; more important still was it that his servant should be able to write his name without being able to read. Happy are they who are blessed with suitable servants, and Job was pre-eminently fortunate in securing the services of one who was endowed with all the qualifications enumerated, and a great many more equally necessary to the well being of master and servant.

Friday had been in the service of two elderly

maiden ladies, who were much given to outdoor praying and indoor fasting: who had a great preference, in their numerous visits to the poor, for distributing tracts rather than money; they were a very sighing, praying, and scolding couple, and there is no doubt that for the formation of Friday's character these devout creatures were responsible. The young man had been in their service from the time he completed his education at the evening school in the street. Had Cobbett been acquainted with this domestic, he would have spared the magistracy the epithet of "the great unpaid," and applied it to Friday; for the said Friday was certainly of much greater dimensions than the frugal quantity of provisions with which he was supplied could account for. However, he continued to grow bigger, and worse, while the maiden ladies were never for two moments of the same opinion respecting him. Sometimes, as he rose from his knees after family prayer, with a face as straight as a gridiron, and his eyes scarcely open, they thought he might

be made into a Methodist minister ; at other times their fond hopes were frustrated, and they were unanimously of opinion that he would come to the gallows. There was a wide range for Friday's footsteps between these two extremes, and up to the present moment he had steered without any danger of reaching either.

The first incident that led these charitable ladies to the conclusion that Friday would end his days on the scaffold, happened one evening, when as Miss Martha was in the midst of a very long prayer, which was fast lengthening itself into a sermon, and in which she was denouncing herself as particularly vile, certainly the vilest creature on earth with the exception of Friday, the devout Friday gave a very long and startling snore, more like the roar of a wild animal than anything else. After prayers, on being accused of sleeping, Friday, with great boldness of spirit, declared that he wasn't.

There was every reason to believe that the excellent counsel of Martha had not been without

its effects upon the refractory Friday, and he was again rapidly rising in the barometer of her opinion; he was considerably past "changeable" —was almost up to "fair." At length quite up to fair, approaching "set fair," and was again on the point of attaining to the dignity of methodist minister, when one evening he entered the presence chamber, to join in the family devotions, so unmistakably drunk, that the barometer fell with wonderful velocity to "very wet."

Now these ladies had become acquainted with the heir of the Hawkins estates at one of their tea-meetings; and esteeming him, on account of his extremely religious professions—a very pious and charitable gentleman—they promised Friday that they would use their influence in order to get him a new situation. Their promise was faithfully kept, and Job, knowing that a youth brought up in such a school would be a thorough tremendous hypocrite and a liar, determined to engage him. Friday certainly couldn't engross a deed; but he could be a good

witness to one, so they struck a bargain, and he found himself at home once more.

We found Friday, at the commencement of this chapter, replying to a question concerning a parcel and a letter. After Job had received the information respecting them, he informed his trusty servant that he might go to bed; but before Friday had said his prayers, he remembered that a gentleman had called to see his master, so he hastened down stairs and imparted that information.

"Who was it?" enquired Job.

"Wouldn't tell me his name, sir."

"Did you ask it?"

"No, sir."

"Then you mean he didn't leave his name?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was he like?"

Friday thought for a moment; then described the gentleman as being "tall, light-haired, long-wiskered, and thin."

"Any message?"

"Said he would call to-morrow, at eleven."

"Did you say I should be out or in?"

"I said you might be at home, sir, or you mightn't."

"Very well."

And the shrewd boy withdrew.

Job retired to his little cozy parlour, more thoughtful than usual; but free from any painful anxiety. Of his real feelings the indications were never to be discovered in his countenance or manner, for up to the present time Job had never felt the torture of conscience which crime alone can produce. He had hitherto contemplated the difficulties, if they may be so termed, of his committing it; but the last stroke to the forged deed had not been given. He was not yet a forger. Deception and fraud he had practised to a wonderful extent; but he was clear of the criminal bar. The mine upon which he had built the fabric of his schemes was not yet charged with destruction; and, therefore, at present, he was comparatively safe.

CHAPTER VII.

A BAD BARGAIN.

The worst employment of a man is that of plotting the destruction of another. In the heat of passion, expressions may escape the lips, from the contemplation of which, the mind, in its soberer moments, recoils with instinctive horror. The heart, in the fury of its passions, may feel the most fiendish hatred, and the tongue may utter the direst threats; but such hatred usually vanishes, and the threats are generally but the idle utterances of foolish rage. Like the

waters in the abyss below the cataract, the passions may rage and foam; but a little while suffices to calm their turbulence; a little way along the stream, you see the tide flowing almost noiselessly along the flowery bank, or rippling in the sunshine. But the wretch, who, in moments of sober thought, deliberately plots the scheme of diabolical villainy, which is to be accomplished by the murder of another, is a fiend the most terrible on earth.

Solomon was alone in his den—alone with his dreadful self, plotting and contriving the death of Lizzy Wilmington. Two nights had elapsed since we last saw him, and in those two nights his direful resolve had been taken.

"She musht be got rid of," said he, "she musht be got rid of." And his dark Jewish countenance looked the fell determination which his lips mechanically uttered. "But how? by what contrivance? And who was to accomplish his purpose? Not Job—for Job, reckless as he was, had not yet reached so low a state

of degradation as to contemplate murder. Not Job," he thought. "Yet, Job is in debt, deeply in debt. I can shell him out, exposhe him to the world as a shcoundrel!" Yes, old man, you may perhaps denounce him as a scoundrel, and may drive him from the country; but Job never yet regarded money in the light that you do. Job wants money to dissipate it; you want it to hoard; his means of obtaining it are equally detestable; but yours are employed for a worse purpose. Job's money may be his god, for with him it is all powerful, it procures him respect and position; your money is your devil, and it makes your soul itself a place of torment. Bad, therefore, as Job may be, you are worse. There is yet a hedge between you. Murder never yet entered his heart, from yours it springs spontaneously.

Solomon thought long as to the mode of putting away the object which came between him and the prospect of his success. If he could entrap Job into his scheme, he could bend him more

easily to his future plans; but he knew it would be useless to attempt it.

Solomon knew many villains of burglarious stamp, for his little office had been the depository of something more than mere parchment; adjoining it was a dark chamber, into which admission was gained by a secret door, so ingeniously contrived that the police might well be excused if in the minutest search they should fail to discover it. This chamber was of small dimensions and utterly devoid of furniture, if we except the necessary appliances of a crucible, which the old man used to call the refining pot of precious metals; he asserted, that by it he tried whether the metals had been honestly come by or not; but if the test was applied for the sake of delivering those parties over to the hands of justice who should prove malefactors, all that can be said is that they were strictly honest, or the crucible was an arrant liar, for none ever went from Solomon to policeman. However, the crucible, was a most useful fixture, both to burglar and

bullion dealer, for the latter species of trading was combined with the more extensive business of money lending, bill discounting, and heir trapping.

Solomon's occupations, therefore, brought him into connection with all classes of society, and with persons of all gradations in crime, from the budding pickpocket to the full blown burglar. But the Jew had always ostensibly discountenanced the idea of purchasing anything which had not been honestly come by, and in the many transactions which he had had with persons of questionable character, his first business had always been to inquire whether the articles submitted to his notice had been properly obtained, a question which, however it might have reflected on the honour of his clients, was nevertheless supposed to protect his own.

There was one among these gentry who, he had every reason to believe, was not the personification of truth and honesty; he was a man of big, bold dimensions, though somewhat short of stature; his exterior was anything but

pleasing, and his interior perhaps as completely bad as human nature could well be. A more subtle rogue and a more confirmed villain it was scarcely possible to find than Dick Sharp: for his company, more than for that of any other person, Solomon kept the huge horse pistol properly loaded, primed, and at hand. Admit him when he would the money-lender always had a very uncomfortable dread of his presence, and yet his presence was hardly to be avoided under the circumstances which had linked them in their devilish partnership.

On the night when the present chapter commences Sharp was to have presented himself at the office on important business, the nature of which the reader may easily infer.

It was the plan of Solomon to draw the burglar into a plot which would not only rid him of Lizzy Wilmington; but, by making him the instrument of so diabolical a design, place his life in his own keeping. To accomplish this stratagem needed as much cunning as wickedness.

It was a difficult matter to handle without implicating himself; however, gold and fiendcraft can accomplish much among the class of Solomon's associates.

The old man examined his pistol; it was all right; but instead of trusting to a single bullet on such an occasion he thought it better to load with slugs, a plentiful charge of small pieces of lead, for if matters came to the worst Sharp must not gain the victory. The treasures of the old man's house were far from inconsiderable, and, knowing the characters of his visitors, he was under the perpetual dread of being deprived of them.

A few minutes before twelve the low signal was given by means of a piece of concealed wire, which communicated with a small bell fitted close to the old man's chair. Into this secret Job had not been admitted, for he was a lawyer and a gentleman, and whatever his real character was, he took as great care to conceal it from Solomon as from the world itself.

"It'sh him," said Solomon, as he rose with some alacrity, but not with the pistol, to answer the summons.

"Whosh dere?"

"Not the devil yet, Sol," said the gruff voice of Sharp.

Solomon cautiously opened the door, and as carefully fastened it again.

"What's in the wind?" enquired Sharp, as the old man shuffled towards the room.

"Noting dat I knowsh of—noting particulars," replied Solomon.

"Then you might have done your business yourself, without taking a fellow from his warm bed on such a night; but come, let's have that old Tom of yours."

"In good time; but first let me tell you, I'm in a strong fever about dat last packet of yours."

"The last devil," said Dick. "What do you mean,—the plate?"

"Ay, de plate, to be shure."

"Pooh!" said Dick; "what, do you think a fellow stole it?"

Solomon smiled; it was a strange smile, such as never yet was seen on an honest man's face.

"Do you think I stole it, Sol?" repeated Dick.

"Ash if you could do sush a ting," said Solomon.

"I told you it belonged to my grandmother; it was our family plate—did you notice the crest?"

"Not I," said Solomon; "I took your vord, and gave a fair prish in monish."

"Then what have you got to fear?"

"I tink I shall leave off buying silversh."

"As you like," said Dick. "I ain't got no more at present, but I bleeve in two or three days I shall have some more things of grandmother's, and if you don't care to buy, I suppose I must pawn."

"Hem!" said Solomon; "is there moush?"

"Well, for that I hardly know. Grandmother was pretty rich, as I told you once afore."

"And had a fair quantity of platesh at all eventsh," said Solomon.

"Well, if you won't buy, the sooner we parts the better peraps for both. I'm bound for Amerikee."

Solomon looked as though he thought his friend was bound for a more distant quarter of the universe; but he said nothing.

"Now of all chaps," said Dick, "I hates hypercrites, so let's have the honest truth; are you serious?"

"Sherious?" said Solomon. "I am sherious, for I have lost all my monish, and if dat won't make a man sherious, what will?"

"Lost all your money!" exclaimed Dick.

"Yesh; I 'ave lent it upon a large estate, which I was not avare was left in de way it ish."

"I should as soon ave thought o'deceivin the devil as you; how d'ye make it out?"

"You know Hindly?"

"I does."

"I lent him twenty toushand pound on Raymond Hall."

"And a good lend too, fifty per cent."

"It would have been vare goot; but you see it will go from him if he don't marry a certain young lady, a Mish Waltersh."

"And he won't?"

"I tink he won't, because I hears dere ish a wench he ash been dallying wid dat—"

"Ha! but what then?"

"I'm ruined; dat ish all 'bout it."

"Who's the wench?"

"A fisherman's daughter."

"Everybody knows her; the ansomest gal in England."

"I wish she was de uglish," said Solomon, accompanying his expression with an oath that would have frightened Nero himself.

"What's to be done?" said Dick, "get her over the sea, eh?"

"No," said Solomon, "I would rather lose all my monish dan have a hand in injuring her."

"I didn't say injure her," answered Sharp. "I said put her over the sea till—"

"Couldn't do dat," said the Jew, "it ishn't de poor girl's fault."

"Well, then it ain't mine," said Dick, "so if I can't help yer, it's no use talkin—pour out the stuff."

Solomon felt that his business was already half done, and his companion knew too well the character of the crafty money lender not to be aware that his suggestion would lead to a bargain. They drank, and for sometime neither resumed that topic of their discourse, although each was waiting for the other to return to it. However, as they imbibed more of the liquid, it inspired the usual degree of boldness, and a more unrestrained tone gradually marked their conversation. The little that had been related by Solomon was sufficient for a man accustomed to deal in hints and dark allusions,

and therefore it was unnecessary to give Dick any further explanation of the circumstances involved in the hasty allusion to twenty thousand pounds and a girl who stood in the way of it.

Solomon hated Sharp, and the reason is obvious; the latter knew his character and invariably acted accordingly; nor did he in his hilarity, which frequently resulted from the liberal supplies of the old man's wine, to which he helped himself, take any pains to conceal his knowledge. It was then that he spoke out freely not of his own, but of his host's character, and it was then that he indulged in many epithets and nicknames which left no doubt of his opinion respecting Solomon, however much he affected to trust to him in his soberer moments.

"Now then, old eavenly-minded," said he, "what's to be done? fact is you want to get rid of this little wench, eh? Out with it, come?"

"Not I," said Solomon, "but I want de monish, dat ish all."

"And can't get it while the gal stands in your

way. Now spose—only spose—we ain't a goin to do it; but only spose she could be got away so as this—what's his name?"

"Hindly."

"Hindly couldn't ave her."

"Shuppose," said the Jew, "but shupposing ish not doing; and I don't see how it ish to be done."

"And don't care, I spects; eh, old—old flay-em-alive, now how much?"

The question was direct, and an answer would be dangerous, Solomon thought. So he considered a moment, and then replied—

"You see, I know her father."

"'Taint nothing to me if you knows her whole tribe!"

"But I shouldn't like harm done to her."

"Now, Solomon, the devil's in yer, and if you're a goin to preach, let's have the text, or I wouldn't give two damns for your sermon—business is business, and we alays could manage together; if you don't want me give me your blessin, and

another glass of that old stuff, and let me be off. What d'ye say, do yer want it done?"

A slight shudder passed through the old man's limbs, for he felt that probably the life of Lizzy depended upon his answer.

"I won't have her harmed, mind; if you can prevent the marriage, there's a shousand pound for you, but no violence, mind. Do you undershtand?"

"How much down?"

"Ten," said Solomon.

"Then give ten to him as will do it. Dick Sharp never wanted ten so bad as that. Down with a hunderd and I'm your man."

"I haven't got so much, by heaven!"

"Then let's have fifty?"

The old man had provided himself with that amount before his guest's arrival, for he took care to conceal from him the secret depository of his treasure. Counting down, therefore, the stipulated sum, he resumed his former position.

"Mind," said Sharp, as he pocketed the gold.

"I shall have two thousand if it turns out right?"

"Not one farden more dan I have said," answered Solomon.

"Then do it yourself, and peach, if you like," answered Dick.

"Peach!" said Solomon.

"Ha, peach! It's as well to understand each other, Sol, afore we begin, and then there cant be no mistake arter; it wants a strong nerve you know—a werry strong nerve. The gal's devilish andsome, I'm told, and as good and gentle as a lamb; now a feller might unt a wolf with pleasure, but a lamb's a hard job to run down."

"We shan't fall out," said Solomon.

"Then you'll shell out more handsomely than a single thousand? You say you gets twenty?"

"It's a mishtake, it ish only half mine."

"Ten, eh? well that's eight clear, while I runs the risk and does the work. Is it agreed?"

"You shall have it," said the Jew, "but mind, not till the marriage, for until den I gets noting."

"I'll ave it as soon as earnt, or I won't move a single step."

It was agreed, the dark business was settled, and after a short time, the burglar rose to depart. As he went, his eye met that of the wretched Jew; each seemed to read the other's intention, and Solomon, eager to guard himself from the consequences of a deed of which he was the instigator, again urged his villainous instrument to adopt some crafty means, but on no account to use violence.

"Leave it to me," said Sharp. "You remember old Russel. Why, I used him so gently that the old chap didn't know when he was gone."

Thus saying, he quitted the room, the door slammed to with a heavy sound, and the bolt and chains were replaced. The old man slunk to his chamber, but there was a ghastly recollection flitting through his mind even during his sleeping hours, of the old helpless miser to whom the last words of Sharp referred.

CHAPTER VIII.

INCREASED INTEREST.

WHATEVER effect the communication of Job had upon the unscrupulous Jew, it is but justice to say that the destruction of the beautiful Lizzy never entered the mind of the forger: bad as his life had been, murder he had never contemplated; but he felt the absolute necessity of preventing a marriage which would have an effect so detrimental to his interest. After his trusty Friday had left him he lit his cigar, and before opening

the parcel or the letter, his mind wandered into the subject of his conversation with the money lender. He was fully resolved as to the course he should pursue with regard to him, but with the important matter of Lizzy he was not so decided. To break off the attachment might be accomplished by means of a couple of letters, the one to Edgar from Lizzy, and the other by way of answer. But there was still a difficulty, the handwriting of his friend he had, but the autograph of Lizzy he had never seen; it might, however, be possible to do without it. Job was a skilful penman, practised in the imitation of handwritings. For several evenings he had occupied himself in copying the up and down strokes, the curves and the crosses of his father's pen, a work of no little difficulty in consequence of the unscholarly appearance which it presented. Job had not yet succeeded to his satisfaction, for on holding it to the looking glass, he discovered many points of dissimilarity; here and there appeared a stroke which betrayed unmistakeable signs of

penmanship, and therefore it was necessary to repeat the performance again and again.

There was a letter from Hindly in his desk. He took it, spread it before him, and commenced his task. The first efforts were unsuccessful; the "E" and the "g" were traitors; but another, and then another attempt were more faithful, till at last the signature was sufficiently accurate to deceive an unpractised eye; but yet it was not all that Job required. There must be no bungling in matters of that kind, and a bungling forger is certainly a dangerous penman. The work, thought Job, must be so perfect, that even those shrewd dogs of "experts" shall be deceived. If the worst comes to the worst, the very oath of Hindly must be disbelieved in presence of the writing; and again and again he commenced the wearying task. He examined it through a magnifying lens, and at length, after many efforts, he succeeded; the letter was written, and Job was satisfied with his success.

The next business was to open the letter which was lying before him; the briefest glance convinced him that it was of no importance. The handwriting on the envelope was that of a lady, and Job always protested that women's writing was never important. It may appear strange, nevertheless, that he did not tear open the envelope before he commenced his work, but in truth the more surprising part of the matter is, that he did not tear it up altogether, and glance at the contents as they discovered themselves on the fragments; for letters of the kind which lay before him were far from unfrequent, the well-known stamp of a religious society, with its raised letters, being a conspicuous object on the dirty yellow envelope. There was, however, at last a sharp application to this business; the outer covering was torn off and flung into the fire. The next moment, the rustling paper was unfolded to the lawyer's eye. An impious expression with respect to the Christian association, from which the

letter came, escaped the young man's lips, and a few incoherent but perfectly intelligible words followed.

"Take the chair—hem—and a sovereign—I suppose. Hang their associations—that's what ruins a fellow. But it must be done. Well, well—its character, position helps me, and does them no harm, I dare say. So long as I am the head of Christian associations, and the principal spouter at tea-meetings, I can't be so very bad. And why should I be bad? I haven't injured the governor, I haven't injured Solomon, for he's a deuced sight too bad to be made worse, and I am sure I have no intention to injure myself. After all, these Christian associations are blessed things, and so are tea-meetings, especially when a fellow gives well—and—and—well, no matter whose it is, Job. Martha and Mary's stock is invested in—let me see—I think they said the Three-and-a-half per Cent. Consols; but what's the packet?"

The covering was torn off, and a pair of

beautifully worked slippers revealed themselves to Job's admiring eyes, the mutual gift of Martha and Mary, but which was Martha's and which was Mary's it was impossible to say. They were "straights," not rights and lefts; but it was no matter. Job pulled off his boots and put on the slippers, and then the inscriptions (two texts of Scripture, one on each foot) stared him in the face.

"Let me see, Three-and-a-half per Cent. Consols. I think I can make more than that for them. And I'm sure I would do so with the greatest pleasure. They are good old girls, and I'm indebted to them for Friday."

From Job's thoughts it may be gathered that a conversation respecting the funded property of Friday's late mistress had been the subject of previous discussion, and the matter is little to be wondered at when it is considered that Job's position with respect to them might have been envied by any one who was not entirely indifferent to the flatteries of the fair. He was a young

gentleman of known talent and reputed wealth. His charity was unbounded, and his speeches were proportionately admired. His philanthropy was the theme of every tea-table, and his presence the delight of every party. He was a bachelor, and as such had no occasion to make display in his establishment. Parties he seldom gave, and those, of course, only to bachelor friends. The consequence of all this greatness, and wealth, and talent was that slippers and hair-marked handkerchiefs poured in almost weekly. Every speech made an addition to his wardrobe, and the bread that he cast upon the waters was thrown with the full assurance of its return after a few days. Not that Martha or Mary had any sinister or matrimonial views in presenting Job with the articles with which his feet were ornamented. Those ladies had a higher object, and the manifestation of their regard and appreciation was the utmost that the most envious could ascribe to them. They were not women of this world, and their

motives were pure as their demeanour was proper; but they did think it would be a good thing if they could get a little more for their money than the "Three-and-a-halfs" produced, and if Mr. Hawkins would secure it for them free of charge, his professional services were surely worth the consideration of a pair of slippers.

To persons in the enjoyment of plenty, who never know the curse of poverty and of living respectably on a small income, it is almost impossible to convey an idea of the anxiety which the weekly apprehension of being unable to meet one's payments produces. An honest man suffers most. To avoid "calling his creditors together" is his great struggle. The rogue, on the other hand, generally *disperses* them without the slightest feeling of remorse for the injury he may occasion; and so far from blaming himself, whatever extravagance or recklessness has produced his bankruptcy, he invariably exonerates himself, and censures the world at large—his worst enemies being those who have the daring

impudence to ask for their money. The law of bankruptcy is the mighty engine with which he drives through society, to the destruction of many and the severe maiming of all with whom he comes in contact. Credit is the motive power, and when once the steam is fairly up, it is impossible to say either how fast or how far it will go. There are many ways of getting on in the world, but the most rapid and efficacious of all is undoubtedly that of presenting a fair exterior, and inspiring people with a belief of one's honest principle, by punctual payments, regular attendance at church, liberal almsgivings, and careful attention to the minutiæ of social life, such as patronising mechanics' institutes, speaking at anniversaries, and subscribing to the multifarious societies whose delegates may honour you with a call.

Job had studied human nature, and he knew that all this was absolutely necessary to his becoming great in society. But to accomplish all this with two pounds a week was preposterous to think

of. Therefore, if he subscribed, he must borrow of Peter to pay Paul. There would be a time undoubtedly, when he should inherit his father's blessing; that is to say, there would, no doubt come a time when the old gentleman would die, and come whenever it might, Job would then be able to pay off everything, and reserve a large surplus into the bargain. Till that event should happen, he must borrow, not only as much as he could, but how, when, and where he could. He had done so; but the more he borrowed, the more necessary he found it to borrow still. As he sat thus meditating, his thoughts naturally reverted to Martha and Mary, whose funded property was a source of so much anxiety to them; and he began turning over in his mind the position in which they stood, and that which he also occupied with regard to them. They had neither chick nor child; they had no relatives that he ever heard of, none, at all events, that they owned. Their mother had been a sort of old-fashioned time-piece, that had worn itself out;

their brother had died in the Indies, just before he was made field-marshal, and their sister had gone, Heaven knew where, eloped it was believed, with a naval officer. And so Martha and Mary were left to buffet with the wide, wide world—their wide, wide world being their chimney corner and the poor peoples' cottages of the neighbourhood, at which latter places they learned all the gossip, and most of the scandal of the district. They had asked Job once or twice to make their will—the reluctant lawyer, however, after learning that their intention was directed rather towards public charities than himself, had postponed, from time to time, this little piece of professional service.

In his present position, however, he thought it wise to turn his attention to the subject, more especially as he had been requested to transfer the funded property into more productive securities. But "security" was a word which rather baffled even this sagacious lawyer to define.

"Security," said he, "security means simply the making secure; that is, secure of their in-

terest, and while the interest is safe, what matters about the principal? I will secure that. No harm in that plan; it won't injure them, because they will have the yearly or half-yearly income, and it will do me a vast deal of good to have the principal. If they leave it to me at last so much the better, I shall have immediate possession without the unnecessary anxiety of waiting for their death; while, if they are determined to bequeath it to charities, I dare say I shall be able to make it good by the time the will is found. Now, let me see—colonial bonds—I wonder how they would like colonial bonds? Good thing; indeed, the very thing. Suggest colonial bonds, deposit them at the bankers, trifling mistake—my name instead of Martha and Mary's—and then borrow from the bank on the security. Capital! Pay up the dividends like a brick—'wast always a good boy, Job.'"

Thus the lawyer devised his scheme of disposing of Martha and Mary's capital, and, thus argued himself into the belief that there

was no particle of fraud in the transaction. He was renowned for honesty and integrity, and the implicit reliance which the confiding ladies reposed in him was all that was necessary to the success of his plan. That he intended to use the principal, and pay punctually the interest accruing, is the truth. It might even be possible to prove that his design was to repay, to extricate himself ultimately from all his embarrassments, and to stand out before the world in reality the character which he had so long assumed; but the false step had been taken; he had lent his talents, which were by no means contemptible, to the accomplishment of objects which, in point of fraud and deception, had never been surpassed in the annals of crime.

Whether Martha or Mary that night dreamt of Job or colonial bonds, it is impossible to say; but the lawyer revolved his plans in his mind as he lay upon his pillow; and as scheme after scheme unfolded, the characters of all concerned in them passed before his vision like actors in a drama.

First, his father, with his immense property, the whole of which Job intended to manage; next Gregory whom he certainly intended to deceive with a pretended conveyance, to the detriment of some eager client; next Edgar Hindly; then the unsuspecting Lizzy; then came the Shark, as he termed Solomon, whom he meant to ease of his ill-gotten wealth; and lastly (for the present), the pious ladies, whose little all was to be invested in colonial bonds.

To some men with half the perplexities which these projects should have occasioned, sleep would have come with troublesome dreams; but Job made it all a matter of business; his only trouble was to maintain a fictitious appearance of respectability before the world; to keep himself buoyant upon the troubled waters of financial enterprise, to be the centre of each respectable circle he joined, the patron of religious societies, the chairman of tea-meetings, and ultimately the director or manager of some company whose capital should be advertised at several

millions. To-morrow evening he was to take "the chair," and from the contemplation of his less innocent intentions, his mind wandered into the subject of his opening speech. Martha and Mary would be there, the clergyman would be there, a great many of the slipper-working ladies would be there, tradesmen with whom he had long bills would be there; Snipp and Buckram might be there, and to all these he must wear the same uniform appearance of devotion to the cause in which his heart and soul were enlisted; but he must act as well as speak; give as well as advocate the cause; and he remembered that he had no money. This, certainly to any other person would have been rather an awkward matter; but he remembered the rent of the Renfrew Farm estate was a week over due. He must wait upon the tenants in the morning, and afterwards borrow the money he should be sure to collect, trusting to Providence for whatever else might turn up.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HINDLYS.

Edgar Hindly was a pitiable yet noble ruin. His previous career, therefore, may not be uninteresting, or without instruction. He carried about with him the gratifying reflection that he had broken a mother's heart, and almost brought down a "father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." He was born of a wealthy and respectable family. The escutcheons and armour that decorated the hall of his fathers were a testimony of their ancient distinction, while the

portraits that looked upon him from the splendid gallery of Raymonds were those of a long line, each one of which bore the lineaments of the remote founder of their house.

Edgar was an only son, a misfortune to himself and his parents; for, having been nurtured with the indulgence only bestowed upon one in whom the pride and hope of a family are centered, he grew up an uncontrollable and reckless youth, conscious of the important position he occupied in the family, and regardless of the means by which he should fulfil its hopes, or realise its wishes. Yet he was a youth of admirable parts, and of a noble disposition. Unhappily, however, the weeds which grew with such rapidity in so fertile a soil, soon concealed, if they did not choke, the many fair flowers which nature had scattered with a prodigal and careless hand. His very virtues, uncultured, were hardly distinguishable from vices.

Edgar's was the disposition which is always so dangerously captivating in early life—which sets

restraint at defiance, and shocks the sober world with a daring disregard of conventional rules.

It was not strange if a mind so prone to frivolity should form neither a fixed purpose, nor possess an inclination to encounter the serious business of life.

It was with great uneasiness that his parents saw this uncontrollable levity. The desire that he should prepare himself for the high post for which his father had destined him was utterly disregarded, although there was nothing absolutely bad or rebellious in his disposition.

College was left, and Edgar commenced life by falling in love with a girl of humble rank. There is no doubt that his first intentions were nothing more serious than a simple flirtation, but love is another of those matters in the concerns of life that cannot be trifled with or controlled.

It was the desire of Edgar's parents to unite him in marriage to the daughter of a very old and very dear friend; the Walters had been associated with the Hindlys from time imme-

morial; the ancestors of the respective families had fought together at the field of Cressy and the battle of Sedgemore; they had stood together to resist the encroachment of Charles the First on the people's privileges, and they had lent their loyal shouts to the loud huzzas that had welcomed the Prince at the Restoration. But, although Edgar felt that neither Cressy nor Sedgemore, the decapitation of one Charles nor the idolatrous worship of another, had anything to do with the little drama of his life or the affections of his heart, he yet allowed himself to drift into an acquaintance with the proud and wealthy heiress of the Walters. It was only an acquaintance, for real courtship was by far too serious a matter for Edgar to enter into; and to him it did not appear that anything inconvenient could arise from the most intimate friendship that could exist between him and Lucy; he felt that he had no intention to marry Lizzy, and therefore there was no harm whatever in his flirting with Lucy; the former was refinement

without education, beauty without culture; the latter was education without attraction, and culture without personal charms; he loved the one for her simplicity, he admired the other for her artificiality; the society of each was pleasing; the one reflected the borrowed charms of literature and education, the other dazzled with her native brilliancy of wit and beauty. So he was very well pleased with the happy lot that had befallen him, and strange to say, the influence that was exercised upon him from these two opposite quarters was more powerful than had ever been that of parents or tutors, pedagogues or proctors. A new world opened upon his heart; and as he contemplated himself from the mirror of female beauty, an idea, at last of life's importance beamed upon his mind; his perplexity increased, and his erratic mind became more and more unsettled. Life presented new features, but surrounded him with more difficulties; if there was more light on the one side, there was more shade on the other. In an hour

when he thought not he had told Lizzy that he loved, sworn that he loved, sworn never to cease loving! In another moment, forgetful of his plighted vows and his bosom's idol he had promised his father to marry Lucy; and the consequence was that a marriage settlement had been drawn and Raymond conveyed to trustees for the joint lives of Edgar and Lucy Walters, and the survivor, and the first and other sons after the usual manner of a "strict settlement," as the legal phraseology hath it.

But after this business had been transacted, the mind of Edgar wavered, although his heart semed irrevocably fixed. Pride combatted Love and the struggle was long, painful and fierce. Rank, family distinction, friends, patronage on the one hand; beauty, love and poverty on the other. Which should he choose? Who that has ever endured such a conflict but has experienced the bewildering difficulty of standing without wavering between two such tremendous champions? It is one thing to boast of duty, of love, of the dictates of

one's own heart, of conscience, and the hundred other names that will suggest themselves to a dispassionate spectator; it is quite a different thing to experience the hurricane of the passions raging against the bulwarks of Prudence and Policy. The smooth ocean, which the little nautilus dares with its tiny sails, is very different from the boisterous waters that lash the skies and toss the proudest ship as though it were the toy-boat of a school-boy. When Expediency and Love oppose each other the conflict must be fierce; compromise is impossible, negotiation vain, for it must be fought out!

But what was to be done? Edgar did not know; it is scarcely too much to say he did not care; but there were moments in which serious thoughts disturbed him. In the case of both he felt he had gone too far to recede with honour and safety. To marry Lizzy would be to forfeit his father's favour,—to ruin his prospects; to wed Lucy would be to rend from his heart all that he had ever felt of happiness; to trample upon

a love as pure as it was imprudent; to cast from him a pearl of inestimable value, and to inflict upon himself incurable misery. His only resolve, if such it could be termed, was to pursue the same path which he had so long trodden, and to continue to please both; this brought him to the contemplation of perpetual celibacy. But one thing he had not reflected upon, and that was, the probability of a discovery by his parents, an event which was not long postponed.

It was soon apparent to his haughty and austere father that there was an unaccountable reluctance to conform to his wishes with regard to the projected marriage. The reason, however, was not so clear, but Mrs. Hindly, with the usual tact of her sex, suggested the possibility of some other attachment. The suggestion was acted upon by the stern father, who immediately invited the romantic youth into the library.

Edgar little suspected the nature of the ordeal he was to undergo.

Mr. Hindly commenced the business with the ominous "Sir."

"You are aware," said he, "that a certain arrangement has been entered into with respect to your future settlement?"

"I am, sir," replied Edgar.

"Let me ask you then," continued the father, "if it is your intention to treat the matter indifferently?"

"Your question," said Edgar, "is so unexpected that—"

"That you know not how to answer it, I suppose?"

"Not exactly that," replied Edgar, "but at present I must be excused from carrying out your projects."

The answer seemed decisive to the elder Hindly, but he answered—

"I am not to be trifled with, sir. I have made a settlement of certain family matters which will redound to your advantage, if you accede to it, or involve your ruin if you oppose it."

"Ruin!" said Edgar, with a tone which indicated a spirit conscious of the first touch of the fetters which he had till then thought it impos-

sible for anyone to impose. "If you mean ruin, sir," he continued, "I must endeavour to avert it, but rather by energy than submission. I wouldn't be manacled in Heaven itself."

There was a tone of dignity and a look of haughty defiance which told too plainly that Edgar inherited the proud qualities of his family. Such a spirit manifested on any other occasion and to any other person would have made his father exult in the manly independence of his offspring. But now it was pride combatting pride, and the old man felt himself contemned and insulted. For awhile each looked at the other without a motion of muscle or lip; the father's countenance was of a somewhat paler hue, while that of the son was but slightly heightened in its richness.

"Such language," said Mr. Hindly, "leads me to suppose that you have either forgotten your relation to me or that you are resolved henceforth to disclaim it. In the first case I would recall you to remembrance, in the second I would advise you to act immediately upon your inclin-

ation. The tone usually adopted by you to your companions, consisting as they do of an inferior class of beings, is not respectful in the presence of your father. If you cease to recognise my authority, cease also to claim my friendship. Your answer, Edgar?"

"I go, sir."

"Consider," said Mr. Hindly, "the sacrifice you are making. I give you time to reflect."

"I go, sir," said Edgar, "and at once. I have lost your respect and can no longer hope to retain your affection."

"I summoned you," said Mr. Hindly, "to speak of a matter of deep importance to us all, and I ask you what objection you have to the fulfilment of your engagement."

"And I reply," said Edgar, "that in a matter of such personal importance I have a right to refuse both an answer to your question and compliance with your wishes."

The old man turned pale with anger—there was no mistaking the fire that glowed with such

fierce indignation from his eyes; the whole face was characteristic of the man—he felt insulted, and he looked the picture of one writhing under the torture of defeat where he had intended to conquer by a frown; but he had forgotten, in the anticipation of easy triumph, that he was dealing with one as haughty and high spirited as himself, with one in whose veins the blood of the noblest families of England was flowing, and whom it would have been as impossible to intimidate with a threat as to bribe with an offer of reward.

Edgar looked independent and proud, unconquered and unconquerable, determined to enter upon the battle of life with what forces he possessed, and to trust to the fortunes of war. At that moment, as he stood waiting his father's answer, he resolved upon his future path; parental restraint should be entirely rejected, and he would at once proceed to London. He had a small income independent of his father, and it was the more necessary for him to strike out into some course on his own account, as the

principal portion of his father's estates had been deeply mortgaged to the Walters family by his grandfather without much hope or possibility of redemption. This circumstance, doubtless, had not been absent from Mr. Hindly's mind in drawing the marriage settlement; and will serve in some measure to explain the eagerness with which he desired a union of the two houses.

Edgar bowed with a haughty, yet respectful air, and quitted the apartment, leaving his enraged father to ponder over their interview.

CHAPTER X.

PACKING UP.

Mrs. Hindly was waiting with great anxiety the termination of the conference between her husband and son; she was aware how much depended upon its successful termination, and eagerly hoped that the realisation of her life's wishes would result from it. It is impossible to say that the embarrassments of the family, if such they might be termed, had no weight in her mind with regard to the proposed alliance, so providentially arranged as she thought, and so abso-

lutely expedient, for the well-being of the respective families. She was not of a mercenary disposition, and certainly deserved little to be suspected of vulgar covetousness. But when money becomes an absolute necessity of our well being, of our social position, rank, dignity, and estate, everyone must confess to some appreciation of its inestimable worth. It is far less difficult to prove that it is the means of acquisition, and not the thing itself that calls forth the fastidiousness of the refined. My lord duke would not relish the glittering coin immediately from the counter, but my lord duke would have no scruples about becoming the legatee of the wealthy shop-keeper, and receiving the proceeds of his industry and economy: it would then be one remove from vulgarity, and after the refining process which it would undergo through the medium of the Court, it would drop into his grace's bankers as pure as if it had been received direct from the mint. Nor is this principle inconsistent with the dignity or refinement of the most polished state of society;

if money be not rank, it is absolutely necessary to its support and maintenance.

Mrs. Hindly was not blind to its importance, and no one ever estimated it more correctly; nor was it from a mere mercenary spirit that she so anxiously waited to hear the result.

Edgar entered alone; his countenance augured disappointment; there was an unusual shade of despondency on his features.

"Edgar," said Mrs. Hindly, "what is this?"

"Nothing," replied the young man, "only that I have resolved to leave."

"Leave!" exclaimed his mother, "for what?"

"Because it is better that I should," said Edgar; "my father and I can no longer agree."

Mrs. Hindly comprehended it all, and the tears started to her eyes.

"Why is this, Edgar?" she asked.

"Simply because my father is determined upon my following his plan, and I am resolved upon following my own."

"You are rash, Edgar, rash, and inconsiderate."

"Reproach me when I am gone," said Edgar; "let my last hour or two under your roof be free from your censure, even if my father stigmatises me as one unworthy his notice. My engagement with Lucy Walters was none of my making, and if I consented it was with that same rashness and inconsiderateness with which you now chide me; had I not been rash I should have as firmly refused submission when he first named it as I have done to-day. I am not ignorant of his relation to the Walters family; and if his father mortgaged the estates, it is no reason why his son should redeem them at a cost greater to me than the value of fifty Raymonds. I will *not* consent."

"Edgar," said Mrs. Hindly; "you have caused us many tears, many anxieties. I never believed you undutiful, although your conduct has been wild and erratic."

"Have I injured you or my father?" asked

Edgar; "or is there a living soul who can accuse me of anything more than the follies that every man in his time has committed? I have not been, I know, a drawing-room pet, or a Sunday school teacher; I am no hypocrite, and I candidly confess that I hate sermons and solemn faces, as I abominate the miserable restraints which they impose; I will not be forced to marry either for expediency, or any other reason; I don't care for your conventionalities and hypocritical civilities."

"I pray God you may learn better, Edgar; the solemn face may yet do you more good than that of the profligate.

"Compare me if you will," said Edgar, "to the wicked boy in the story book; but I hope you will have no more cause to reproach me hereafter than you have now."

"I have only one object," returned his mother, "either in reproaching or advising you; my journey is *out* of life, yours is *into* it; but why should you leave us?"

The tears streamed down the mother's cheeks, and bespoke the agony which she struggled to conceal.

Edgar, in spite of his many faults, had been her pride and hope; aye, her comfort, for the very wildness of his nature blended with such a noble independence of character as half-redeemed his most censurable follies.

"Mother," said he, after a brief pause, "it is impossible for me to remain; my father and I will no longer agree. The only thing that could reconcile us is that which I am justified in refusing."

"You will ruin yourself," said Mrs. Hindly.

"I *am* ruined," replied Edgar, "so far as I know, and I am now going to build a fortune for myself. I shall read for the bar. It cannot be added to the catalogue of my offences that I am a dunce—but I despise my advisers—not you, my dear mother, not my father, but those whose hypocritical friendship is but another name for sanctimonious impudence. I have had my follies,

but they are past; and I will never contract myself into a plodding country gentleman, to walk over Lucy's lands with a paddle, and exhibit my little greatness at the parish vestry, or the petty sessions. I would as soon be a scarecrow in a wheat-field as the terror of the hungry poacher, or the persecutor of the starving wretch like her whom my father sentenced to three months' imprisonment for pulling a turnip."

"Be not your father's accuser or judge, Edgar."

"I leave the one office to his conscience, the other to Heaven," answered Edgar, with little of the tone of filial deference which should characterise the language of a son.

"Hush! Edgar. You will repent your unkindness. 'Honour thy father and mother.'"

Edgar felt the admonition; but he had almost worked himself into a state of rage, and he endeavoured to say hard things. He felt even then remorse for the words he had spoken; but he was in a state of mind to injure even himself, and

seemed to feel an unaccountable gratification in doing so; it was that feeling of bravado and defiance which so often impels us to say more than we mean, and to do more than we intend.

"Then, why does he blame me?" asked Edgar; "I, who have injured no one, imprisoned no one; my chief fault has been harmless sport, and my worst feeling a detestation of snivelling hypocrisy. Did he not send the parson to talk to me as though he would ascertain if I were a heathen or a lunatic? What do I care for parsons? But enough, my folly is over, or, at all events, will no longer disturb the quiet equanimity of your charming circle. I will bid you good-bye, my dear mother, as soon as I can pack up my things."

"Edgar!" said his mother, with a heart almost bursting with emotion, "think—think, my boy, before you plunge into the world—before you leave your best friends; your birth, rank, and name, will pass for little in the world without money, and that I cannot give you."

"I have my grandfather's legacy," said Edgar, "I can work for the rest."

"Work!" said Mrs. Hindly, "you know not what work is?"

"I will write—write," said Edgar.

"Precarious livelihood. Edgar, once more I say, pause."

"Nay, mother; lay no injunction upon me; let me not leave your house with regret for having disobeyed you; give me your blessing, though I carry with me my father's curse. I have done nothing to deserve either, but yet—"

Edgar's feelings overcame him; his eyes sparkled, his lips quivered, his voice faltered; but with a strong effort he repressed the tear that would have betrayed his weakness. There was a strange commotion of pride, love, and anger; and, perhaps, in that painful moment above all others of his life there was more of his true and earnest character displayed. A chain of sympathy seemed to unite every feeling of his passionate nature, and encoiled itself about his heart till his

whole being was a prisoner; he struggled to emancipate himself, but every passion held him; it was hard to say which predominated, for he was subdued by each. His emotion was not unperceived by his mother, who covered her face with her hands, and turned from him, sobbing like one who was parting from her only child for ever. Indeed, a dreadful presentiment darkened her mind that this was indeed the last time she would ever be permitted to gaze upon him who had been for so many years the source of so much hope and so many joys. That moment was the concentration of her life's miseries; her heart was full, and nothing more of sorrow could be added to her cup. She sank into a chair, overcome by the painful emotions that overwhelmed her.

Edgar quitted the room, and hastened to his chamber to complete the necessary preparations for his rashly-determined journey. For the first time in his life he, too, felt the bitterness of parting from her who had been so dear to him—dearer than he had ever known or felt before. Her

grief unnerved him, but not so much as to shake his determination. He tried to repress his feelings, and to stifle his sorrows, but the tears would gush out. He was alone, and yet he felt ashamed of his weakness. A thousand recollections harassed his mind, ten thousand remembrances of motherly kindness and love; such kindness, and such love as are to be met with from no other upon earth, disinterested, pure and holy. But he dared not think. Speed, speed your work, rash boy! wrench open that trunk, and bury at its lowest depth that little golden locket—hide it at the bottom beneath that heap of linen, lest the shining trinket that holds her grey hair unman your resolve; there, fling in the clothes, and slam down the lid; lock it; cord it tightly! *it is there!* and may be, in some moment of recklessness, when you are bent upon a madder project, when the world and you are at variance, when you have abandoned yourself to chance and are heedless alike of the calls of conscience and the warnings of your better genius; when about to

plunge into dissipation, or, it may be, crime, perchance, the little locket you have just buried may start, as from its grave, like a flash of love from your mother's heart, and remind you that the world once had for you a charm, and life a purpose: it may preach to you a sermon that you could not be deaf to if you would, more eloquent than the Bible itself, more mysterious than the deep sympathies of human nature, for it will beam to you with recollections of better days, and recall to your mind the unutterable depth and purity of a mother's love. It is there! Defend that treasure with your life, for it is *hers*—a part of her who is weeping over your departure, too stricken with grief even to utter a prayer, save that earnest yearning that a mother's heart is for ever making for the welfare of her child.

The lid goes down—it is locked! hastily the cord is thrown round—hastily, for there must be no time for thought; the determination must not be suffered an instant's respite. But another trunk must be filled; yes, another; what is this?

Shall he take it? No. It is a prayer-book. He will not want prayer-books. But as he turns it aside the cover falls back,—a few words—only a few—in a lady's hand. Yes, that must go too; and he throws the prayer-book into the box. In another hour he was ready.

CHAPTER XI.

PICTURES.

I SHALL copy a picture that hangs not in every house. There are pictures sketched by imagination, that look so real that you almost believe them to be so; but as you gaze inconsistencies appear—the details are false, and the charm is destroyed. There are pictures, too, of ordinary life, which every one paints, some in his imagination, some on canvas, and others in the chapters of the novel. But there are some scenes—the most interesting—which are never exhibited.

The surface of life shows little of its inner depths; you see the tattered beggar in the street, and his forlorn appearance and deplorable visage excite commiseration; you drop a penny into his shrunken hand, and pass on, lamenting perhaps the woes of humanity; that beggar, probably, knows neither a want nor a care; you meet a woman in abject wretchedness, with a child at her breast, she implores your charity, and has a tale the very eloquence of which bespeaks its falsity; you pause, not to philosophise or enquire whether there is truth in it or not,—your heart is touched, you relieve her and pass on, enjoying the gratification which your twice blessed gift produces. A decently dressed, rosy-faced child accosts you, her appearance indicating clearly an effort at humble respectability; she has a little basket of flowers on her arm, and a small bundle of violets neatly tied in her hand; she offers the bunch for a halfpenny. You don't want flowers, and tell her so, not rudely, but not quite kindly; she is a trader, and, therefore, not

an object of pity; there wanted the necessary tatters to indicate poverty; there was no squalid face, no plaintive wail, no demand, in fact, upon your sympathy, and, therefore, you felt that it would be like throwing money into the street to relieve her. Your imagination couldn't follow her to her humble home at evening, and see her empty her little bag of halfpence into the lap of her widowed mother, whose girlhood was passed amid brighter scenes, who scorns to beg, and is striving to exist upon her own earnings and the few halfpence which her children bring her. It is the old tale of the unhappy marriage, the widowed heart, the fireless hearth, and the world's cruelty.

But neither of these scenes is my picture. Did you ever feel your eye sparkle, and your heart expand with emotion as you perused some beautiful tale? Have you felt that thrill, as you dwelt with increasing pleasure (so exquisite that you almost feared to turn the leaf lest it should break the spell) on the pages of

some clever, but obscure author, unknown as yet to fame? You have? That tale emanated, probably, from a garret; the price the author obtained for it is gone, before you enjoy the luxury of reading it, in paying the rent of that humble apartment, or the baker's bill. Those words which glow with such resplendent genius, spring from a dark and sombre heart; there was a pale face over a flickering candle where they were conceived, but they show nothing of the pale face or the candle; they glow with the brightness of Heaven; the very sun cheers you not as they do. The mind that conceived those beautiful visions descended from its sublime reverie the moment after, to think of the means by which the poor author should obtain to-morrow's bread; to speculate upon the probability of their being accepted by this editor or that; to think of the arduous struggle of life, and to wonder as it had wondered a thousand times before, why those who administer the luxuries of the intellect should sometimes be denied the smallest pittance

of bodily comfort. Like flashes from ice, those images started from a cheerless heart; like lightning from the clouds of despair.

Of course some authors write in gown and slippers, sitting in a cozy chair, in a well carpetted library, before a cheerful fire, sipping coffee or some still more cheering beverage; that is the *other* side of the picture.

"Precarious!" thought Edgar. "Yes, it was his mother's word; but what did it mean?" "The labourer is worthy of his hire?" True, but he does not always get it.

Edgar was in London. The world and he for the first time were confronting each other; he had entered upon his studies, and was not averse to them; there was a mine of inexhaustible knowledge to be explored, and the rich veins of legal lore were worthy the efforts he would put forth; but he was alone, a stranger, with a world of strangers around him. His mother had supplied him with all the cash at her command, and, with anxiety for his welfare, had also

given him some of her jewellery, the few remaining trinkets which she had preserved from the wreck of her fortune; preserved because the remembrances of better days clung to them, glistened in them, and belonged to them. It was a small, neat parcel, which her own fingers had tied, carefully and securely; these were never to be parted with unless that stern, unfeeling ravisher of our treasures, Necessity, demanded them. But, as yet, Necessity had not cast its shadow upon the walls of Edgar's drawing-room; his money was not exhausted, and the legacy of his grandfather seemed for awhile like the widow's cruse of oil.

The career of recklessness which he had led was suddenly checked, and the pause may be attributed chiefly to the new and strange scenes with which he was surrounded.

Edgar now looked at himself as he was reflected from the great mirror of the world; his own person no longer filled the picture of life, he was one of the smallest objects in it; his

self-opinion was gone, and for the first time he measured himself by the standard which the world uses. Among his circle of acquaintances he had been the admired of all and the envy of many; his faults had brought him as much praise as censure; or, if censure it might be called, it was the censure he could almost be proud of, for his conduct had been ascribed to erratic genius; strange, bewildering, intoxicating thought. Were not all the great master-pieces of nature prone to extravagances of one form or another? Whether this was a judicious mode of reasoning on the errors of youth, need not be asked; that it was exceedingly dangerous, is certain. It confounded folly with wisdom, and attributed actions of a responsible nature to talents of an exalted order. But Edgar was now away from prejudice and partiality; henceforth, his balance pole must be Prudence, and all his talents will not save him from the world's censure if he make a slip. Look down young man, 'tis an awful depth at the left of you, and the bottomless pit of

crime itself is only concealed by that mist which floats with a thousand blending hues between you and it! Look down once, and then *upward* for ever; that bright spot which glitters before you is the point which, steadily watched, will enable you to retain your balance; call it ambition if you will, call it a love of fame if you like it better, but keep straight on in God's name.

One night after Edgar had dined, he walked leisurely down the Strand; he was alone, and very busy with himself about the different scenes that passed before his eye; he was somewhat of a moralist, although he would have been ashamed for anyone to think so. "Neither a humbug nor a hypocrite" was his favorite motto, and in very deed he was neither. He had come to town to escape his father's dictatorship, and to push his way in the world by his own exertions, although, as yet, he had not begun to put forth his energies; he had shut himself up pretty much lately without at all intending to be a recluse, and now as he began to grow familiar with the

streets of London, there was no reason why he should not become acquainted also with some of its scenes. There was no reason why he and the world should fall out before they had seen each other, and, perhaps, after all the world wasn't half so unkind as he had conceived. He turned into one of the places of resort in the Strand, not with a hypocritical sigh as though he was going there to moralise, and coming away again to preach, but resolved to see whether there was anything to amuse him.

Looking upon the scene with a half-vacant, half-interested gaze, was a young man, with the appearance and manners of a gentleman; he was elegantly attired in a suit that set off his well-proportioned and handsome figure; a fine broad forehead bespoke capacity of intellect, and a delicate moustache indicated a more youthful period of life than the thoughtful and somewhat manly countenance. There was an air of quiet ease and graceful dignity that shewed the breeding of a gentleman, and an acquaintance

with good society. Edgar took his seat beside the stranger, and although naturally averse to the idea of what is called "scraping an acquaintance," found himself, in a little time, in conversation with his neighbour. There was much congeniality of taste and sentiment between Edgar and his companion, and no little pleasure was derived from the interchange of thought which naturally flowed from the variety of topics on which they conversed. Each had a romantic turn of mind, the consequence of which was a mutuality of opinion on the leading incidents of life. But it was soon apparent to Edgar that his companion, while entertaining many notions in accordance with his own, viewed life through a vastly different medium from that which had reflected it to him.

"There never was a truer sentence uttered," said the stranger, "than that of Shakespear, that the world's a stage. These people who appear for our amusement, are actors speaking what they don't mean, pleased with our applause, and believing themselves worthy of it.

The whole face of humanity is a mask, all are actors, not using the term figuratively, but literally; but they are actors before actors—there's no audience in the world, but every man plays his part. Deception is everywhere, more perhaps in the pulpit than on the stage; the tailor who measures you for your suit mocks you with a fictitious civility—he wants your money; the landlady of your lodgings affects to seek your comfort—she wants your money; the platform orator takes up the cause of some pious society —he wants your money. So with all—money is the paymaster of the world and its idol."

"But surely there are nobler spirits than the tailor, or your landlady, or the hypocrite?" said Edgar.

"But all bow before that one divinity," answered the stranger, "and since none can do without its influence one can hardly blame them for invoking its aid. The golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king set up is the very golden image which the men of this generation set up too;

but there is this difference between us and the worshippers of old, that it needs not 'the sound of the lute, sackbut, psaltry, dulcimer, and all kinds of music' to summon them to devotion; all are ready whether there's a band or not; as soon as the sun rises the millions go forth to worship. They worship all day long with untiring enthusiasm, sleep at night to dream of their idol's power, and wake again to propitiate its favour."

"I fear then," said Edgar, "that we are all included in this sweeping assertion."

"To a great extent,"

"And those whom fortune favours?" said Edgar.

"Are few enough, and it has always puzzled me to resolve their success to its cause. I can understand a man's husbanding small gains and doubling them by compound interest; but I cannot imagine by what means sackfulls of the golden treasure are poured down at a single shower."

"By no means corresponding to the receiver's

deserts, or proportionate to his efforts," said Edgar.

"Certainly not; but I must be going. Hope I may have the pleasure of meeting you again."

"I shall be most happy," said Edgar. And leaving the place they separated.

CHAPTER XII.

Edgar had never an intention of sailing down the stream of London gaiety. His ideas on reaching the capital were that he would be able to preserve himself isolated amid all its temptations and amusements; he would see as much as he could without becoming an actor in its scenes. Not that he was intent upon becoming the serious, staid individual, such as people like Martha and Mary would have advised; he was neither a misanthrope nor a methodist, but he had set out with one object in view—that of pushing his fortune—and he was thoroughly alive to the fact of his limited means. With a firm resolution, therefore, he determined to see life with-

out mixing in it. But he was hardly aware that even his talents were treacherous. Like a bark overcrowded with sails, he was impelled on and on by breezes which would hardly have influenced other voyagers on the same stream, and before he was fully aware of the progress he had made, was actually in the rapids. To drop the figurative style of expression, Edgar, before he was conscious of the fact, was in debt. Now, how one gets into debt and difficulties is sometimes an inexplicable mystery; and how to get out of it is no less, so if we put aside the bankruptcy manœuvre. If moral principle were sufficient to sustain a man, Edgar had a sufficiency of that; if resolution were of any effect at all, he was not lacking in that; he had led a steady life, pursued his studies with assiduity, kept good hours, and spent little. But yet he was pestered with applications for money, and his landlady, he thought, was not so respectful or obsequious as was her wont. Now, then, was the time for Edgar to put his

talents to the test, and to venture upon that "precarious" avocation which has disappointed the hopes and expectations of so many thousands. His mother, he knew, was not in a position to render him all the aid that was needed, and his proud spirit recoiled with indignation from the thought of applying to his father; they had parted in anger, and he would never sink into a suppliant for his charity. He had yet the jewels, those dear treasures which had belonged to his family for so many generations; but these were like the life blood of his heart, and should be buried with him in his grave rather than find their way into the hands of persons who would only appreciate them at their pecuniary value. But, Poverty, thou art a great leveller, a hard master—an unyielding tyrant! Woe to the man that experiences the conflict of lofty independence and iron poverty! What swelling of heart! What distraction of mind! What unutterable agony of soul as it staggers under the heavy shocks of that terrible encounter!

How he shrinks with the fear of wounded honour, of a ruined reputation, of the world's scorn or pity! His are not the feelings of a man that heedlessly plunges into dissipation, and has no care for men's opinion. He is a man of fine sensibility, and feels the smallest puncture inflicted upon his reputation more keenly than others do the lacerations of character by the mouths of the enraged victims of their recklessness.

With Edgar, to be in debt was to be shorn of his honour.

Yes, debt is a very bad thing if you can't pay; it makes no friends, and generally causes you to lose those you have. Few men care for those who can't pay their way, and those of too sensitive feelings are apt to magnify misfortunes into crimes. Your debtors generally do so—and few will believe in your high principle if they do not perceive the substantial fruits of it when they present you with "their little account," or enquire if it is convenient for you to return the little sum you borrowed.

Edgar tried his hand at literary composition, and with the pardonable vanity of a young author, looked with some degree of satisfaction on his first production. He compared it with the writings of others, and it seemed to present a favourable contrast. Alas! for the fondness of literary paternity. It was sent to a fashionable periodical, and—returned with the Editor's compliments and regrets, that "it was not suitable." That good old motto, "try again," was put in practice, and again, and again Edgar tried, till at last, O! joyful moment, his fame was achieved, his fortune made—he was in print! Dangerous delusion! How many hours and days had he toiled for the few guineas which his writing brought him! But it was an augur of future success, and he wrote again; a few months however of arduous labour and severe application recalled again his mother's expression, "precarious" livelihood. Fame is not achieved, nor a fortune won by a few papers in the periodical press. Home thoughts sometimes returned, but

pride and a feeling of independence kept them down; he would never return to the father who had disdained him—such humiliation would be worse than poverty itself.

Edgar received remittances from his mother, not of large amount, certainly; but they would have been sufficient with careful husbanding to preserve his credit, and stave off the pressure of obligations, which, by some unaccountable means or another, increased upon him.

One evening he had returned to his lodgings, tired with what he deemed the hard and unfriendly world. Another note upon his table, another request for an early settlement; he cursed his debtors, and complained of the stern severity of his fate. He tore open the envelope, and glancing down the contents, dashed it from him; flung himself into his chair, and meditating over his troubles, wondered why, among all the world that he saw around him, busy and enjoying life, he alone should be unhappy; he alone unable to earn sufficient for his support.

Edgar had formed acquaintances; some of them were even friends, among the latter he reckoned Job Hawkins; but he had not squandered much with them—they were not extravagant. Of all the persons he knew, perhaps he lived the least expensively.

As he thus ruminated, and grew more and more disheartened, a knock aroused him from his unhappy reverie, and into his presence was ushered "Mr. Hawkins."

"The blues!" said Job. "Yes, by Heaven! the blues!"

"Glad to see you, Hawkins—into the chair with you and—"

"What's the matter, Hindly?"

"Nothing—nothing," said Edgar.

Job glanced at the open letter as he sat; its position fully indicated that the secret of his friend's melancholy was there; moreover, there were certain figures with the dreadful £ s. d. and the red lines. It was a delicate matter; but Job was made for delicate matters, and generally

was adroit enough to draw his friends into the confession of a secret. It was not, perhaps, that he expected to profit by a disclosure of Edgar's circumstances, but rather a curiosity, or at most, a mutuality of feeling with a companion in circumstances similar to his own. Job suspected the cause of the sad countenance, the unsteady burning of the bright eyes, the agitation of the lips, which, in vain, attempted by words to disguise it all.

"Well, how has the world behaved to you, old fellow, since I last saw you?" And Job puffed away at his cigar as though expecting the usual common-place answer to his inquiry.

"I don't know," said Edgar; "it's an awful humbug."

"Just made the discovery?" said Job, smiling, "I thought I had given you enough of my little experience to convince you of that. I look on men in general, Hindly, as beasts of prey, especially these trading folks."

As Job spoke, he pointed, as if accidentally, to

the letter on the table; but so unconcernedly, that it might have been construed into an unmeaning gesture, only that there was an expression of countenance, and a half-smile about his lips, which could hardly have been mistaken by any person having less confidence in him than Edgar.

The latter lighted another cigar, and after a few vigorous puffs, resumed his former position of American ease.

"Will you go to the opera to-morrow?" asked Job.

"Can't," replied Edgar; "indeed I must live more quietly."

"Quietly!" exclaimed Job, "the most quiet fellow in London talking of more quietness. I shall expect to find you next at some Quaker's meeting. I thought I was the very personification of dulness and sobriety, but I give in after that."

"Look," said Edgar, seriously, "I shall be

candid with you, Hawkins, and the truth is my bills are coming in, and must be met. I have overdone it lately, and must now shrivel up into a hermit till these are got over. There's a fellow there, my tailor, in a deuce of a hurry for twenty pounds. I hate these brawling money-mongers."

"So do I, heartily," said Job; "but your liabilities, I should think, would hardly exhaust a child's money-box. Excuse me, Hindly, perhaps I presume too far on our friendship?"

"Not at all," said Edgar; "but there's a vast disproportion between your notions of money matters and mine, which is easily accounted for. You are on easy terms with a rich father, while I am at open warfare with one of moderate means."

"Tut," said Job. "No one has known more worry than I in these matters; my governor is as close with me as though I were the wildest colt that was ever put in harness. As for your outgoings, they are nothing—nothing, my dear fellow."

"I don't know how you manage," answered Hindly, "but I know my circumstances, and I must prepare to meet them."

"The way I manage is simply this," said Job; "nothing more easy in the world—*bill it.*"

Edgar looked—not amazed exactly, but very much perplexed to discover the exact meaning of the phrase "bill it."

"I see," said Job, "you don't understand me. You know how to draw a bill, I suppose?"

"I have never drawn one."

"But you have read 'Byles on Bills,' surely?"

"No," answered Edgar.

"It's a simple matter of writing one's name on a piece of paper, and directing someone else to pay the money."

"Suppose I direct it to you then," said Edgar, laughing.

"But there must be effects in the party's hands, whom you order to pay the amount," said Job.

"That's the devil of it. I thought it wanted something more than the mere writing."

"It must be *accepted*, of course."

"And who the deuce is going to accept such a thing?" asked Edgar.

"The same old gentleman that accepts mine," said Job.

Edgar looked more astonished than ever.

"You doubt," said Job, "now look; write on a sheet of stamped paper a promissory note, leaving the amount in blank, then draw a bill, and come with me to a man whom I will introduce you to, and I'll engage to say you shall have no more trouble about money matters, from the present moment to the time mentioned for payment."

"But I presume," said Edgar, "his terms will be by no means easy."

"I speak from my own experience," said Job; "and all I can say is that he was never hard with me. Of course he'll want security, but he'll take your promissory note for any small

sum such as that—I think you said it was twenty."

"Twenty!" repeated Edgar, feeling greatly relieved by the interesting piece of intelligence which his friend communicated.

"I suppose you are of age?" said Job.

"Just turned twenty."

"Owed five hundred pounds before I was sixteen," said Job, with an air of satisfaction, which would have comforted any man on the verge of bankruptcy. "However," he coninued, "it's not for me to persuade you; I only suggest it for your good. You say you're pressed for money; I show you where to obtain it."

"Here is a thing," said Edgar, taking up a newspaper; "let me see—where is it? O, here it is—'money without security, from five to five hundred pounds.'"

"Yes," answered Job, smiling, "I have an intention of going to one of those places one day for five hundred."

"Think you'll get it?" asked Edgar.

"Why, I'm hardly so sanguine," replied Job; "but if there's a possibility of it, I think I'm about as likely a fellow as any in the world—but I shall go for the fun of the thing."

"I see. What's the name of this friend of yours?"

"Friend! he's no friend of mine," said Job; "he's the fellow who lends to all fellows who are short of cash, noblemen and gentry—everybody knows him in fashionable society."

Edgar smiled; there was such an aristocratic air in the manner of his friend as he spoke, and such a calm and careless style about him that one would almost have imagined that to get into debt was the finest thing in the world, especially if it could bring you into the society of Job's money-lending friend.

"Yes, yes," said Edgar, "you know what I mean; but his name?"

"Solomon."

"A Jew!"

"I suppose so; but what matters whether Jew or devil, so as you get your turn served."

"Don't like borrowing," said Edgar.

"I don't want you to borrow, my dear fellow; but this much I can tell you, so far as I am concerned, that rather than be under obligations to friends, I would pay a money-lender double."

There seemed something like independence in this view of the matter, and if Edgar had ever entertained a notion of applying to any private source, that notion vanished now.

"A fellow goes down when he borrows of his friends," said Job, "and it isn't business; I'd sooner pawn my backbone; but I'm sorry I mentioned Solomon now."

"Why?"

"Because I am."

"But why?"

"I have no right to interfere in your private matters; however, if I have done wrong in telling you the course which I and many more adopt,

there is only one thing to add—you need *not* adopt it; but I must be going."

"Will you accompany me to this Solomon's?"

"With all my heart."

"To-morrow night?"

"I'll call for you. No, give me a look in; I shall be at home all the evening. Good night."

CHAPTER XIII.

MAKING MONEY.

Edgar found that nothing in the world was easier than "billing it." Why, old Solomon seemed to take him for granted—that is to say, there appeared not the shadow of a doubt upon the money-lender's mind as to his respectability or character, and it was a problem which Edgar found more difficult of solution than many of Euclid's, as to the means by which the shrewd old man was enabled to form so sudden an estimate of his position. Did he have dealings with

the devil? He had heard of an old woman about "his parts"—that is, the country where he was born—who had dealings with that mysterious character! And perhaps Solomon had? If so, he would be a rather dangerous person after all.

It is only just to acknowledge that these surmises were rather the result of a jocular humour than of serious thought. Edgar was not superstitious, but he possessed that pleasurable sensation of doubt about the matter of supernatural influences and beings, which usually pertains to persons of strongly romantic natures.

It was a great relief to Edgar's mind to find himself thus unexpectedly free from debt, that is to say, so far as his tradesmen were concerned. There would be a time, certainly, when the bill would fall due, but it could be renewed *ad libitum*, and almost, it appeared, *ad infinitum*. The money-lender was a very chatty, pleasant sort of fellow in his way, and if he charged a somewhat heavy interest, it was no more than the money advanced was absolutely worth; at all events, it

was far better to owe him than the many little paltry fellows, who would injure his reputation by speaking of him as a man whom it was dangerous to trust; besides, here was not only the way to pay creditors, but also of obtaining cash for other purposes. Bills were a capital invention, and (by an inversion of the phrase) they were an invention of capital. Job was a clever fellow, and as Job had once said, if the crisis should at last come (and who can provide against adverse Fate, so as to be prepared for her at every corner?), the world will be much more disposed to sympathise with a young fellow whose only fault is being indebted to a money lender, than with one who owes innumerable little accounts, which start up on all sides like tantalizing spirits to torment the poor insolvent. It is well known, too, that juries have no sympathy with money lenders; but they have for small tradesmen. The man's a downright rogue who doesn't pay the latter, but he is merely an unfortunate victim who writhes in the iron grasp of the former.

Such was Job's line of argument, as the two returned from the house of the Jew, after transacting the little business on the stamped paper. The little business was simply this—Job drew, and Edgar wrote his name as acceptor, while Solomon, who advanced the money, was what is called payee, and the bill was to fall due in three months time. It was a curious invention, thought Edgar, as simple as A B C, so far as the machinery was concerned, but he was somewhat puzzled, at first, to comprehend how in the world Job had any business to ask him to pay Solomon so much, and how Solomon had any business to advance so much on the mere authority of that order; he owed Job nothing, and the money lender owed him nothing, and yet it was his duty to advance, or, in spite of the paper it seemed Edgar would owe him nothing. But in time he got very learned, under Job's friendly tuition, in the theory and practice of "billing it." After a while, he found that it was positively possible to coin money—ay, almost as

much as he pleased; for he learned that there were "accommodation acceptances," and moreover, that bills were negotiable, and as his knowledge became still more expanded, he discovered that he, and Job, and Friday, could make almost as good paper money as the Bank of England. It was a strange scheme that; a wonderful process; even Friday could help make money, and the great wonder to Edgar was that everybody did not adopt the same plan. He had often thought that money was merely the representative of wealth, and not wealth itself; but he had never dreamt of stumbling upon a downright practical illustration of it. Here it was beyond all doubt, and if all mankind would only agree to take bills of one another, what a marvellously advantageous thing it would be for society!

This thought seems to have been acted upon by our friends on the other side of the Atlantic during the civil war, and the great developer of the scheme of "billing it," was an ingenious indi-

vidual, whose omnipotent "Greenbacks" have earned him more celebrity than he'll know what to do with.

Yes, Friday could help to make bills; and Friday helped in all possible ways, for he was as active in the business as a blacksmith's apprentice at shoeing a horse during the first week of his term. He did whatever "master" told him; and as it matters little to the youthful blacksmith whether he is told to hold up a horse's leg or hold down a horse's head, so it was very unimportant to Friday whether he drew, accepted, or was payee. To write his name with single letters; that is to say, without any one joining another, was all the penmanship that Friday could boast of; and, as before intimated, it was all that was necessary for his present situation, although he did feel proud when he was waiting at table to hear himself spoken of as "my clerk." Job generally preferred the character of accommodation acceptor, but it appeared to make no difference whatever, how the signatures stood; for, on presenting them

to Solomon they were always cashed. They were not always cashed for the amount they purported to represent, though that was of little consequence, as, if the actual sum required was twenty pounds, it was only to draw the bill for thirty, and Solomon became, in legal phraseology, "a *bonâ fide* holder for valuable consideration"—a person to whom the law pays very great respect indeed.

There came a time when these bills, one after another, became due, and with that regard for punctuality which these mercantile documents always demand, they were regularly presented, and renewed. Edgar made himself very comfortable about them, and seemed to think that he was making money fast. Job was always his best friend, and even occasionally took the liberty of checking him when he thought he was launching out too far.

On one occasion especially, Job extended his familiarity to a great length. It was at Edgar's lodgings. Perhaps it was the wine that inspired Job with so much boldness; perhaps it was only

friendship; but whatever it was, he certainly was bold enough to hint that it was extravagant of Edgar to think of the lodgings he had looked at in —— street.

"What's a fellow to do?" said Edgar. "Must have a place, you know."

"It's true," said Job, "but suppose Solomon calls in his money?"

"By Heaven! No fear of that, is there?"

"I don't say there is; but he's the sort of fellow, you know, that doesn't like to see his friends rushing into extravagance."

"What difference can it make to him?"

"Why, you see, the old man doesn't lend to *every* one. Must be a gentleman."

"Well!"

"For instance, he wouldn't take Friday's bill."

"Why not? He does take Friday's bills."

"Well, yes, so far; but you see the law of bills of exchange is somewhat curious. I think you said you have not studied it."

"I know what a bill is."

"Exactly; but their nature is peculiar. You see, if Friday draws, and you accept, it makes no difference to him, because he has nothing, and the consequence is, Solomon would lose all if you couldn't meet it."

"I should renew it, of course."

"Of course, my dear fellow. I am only putting the case; but now suppose you draw and Friday accepts."

"Yes."

"He being the party primarily liable, Solomon looks to him."

"Exactly."

"And he having nothing wherewith to meet it, Solomon naturally looks to you."

"And I should renew."

"Just so; but then suppose I draw and you accept?" asked Edgar.

"Then I, being an accommodation acceptor, should not be primarily liable. You would still be the party."

"And why is not an accommodation acceptor liable?"

"Because he has no effects of the drawer, and merely does it for his benefit."

"It's hard a fellow is to be dictated to by Solomon," said Edgar.

"He's the dictator of more than you or I know of," said Job, sipping his wine, "a wily old skinflint."

"But I don't owe him much."

"No," said Job, "but if he called it in?"

The "if" certainly looked bigger in the eyes of Edgar than any other word of two letters ever did before. He paused, drank, lit his cigar, and crossed his legs.

"Called it in," he thought. "Hem!"

"Is he afraid of me?" asked Edgar.

"My dear Hindly, you speak as if I were the greatest friend the old money-lender has in the world."

"And you yourself speak as if you were," answered Edgar.

"You mistake me; I speak as a friend to you. I know the old fellow better than you, because I have had, unfortunately, more dealings with

him, and I well know that he keeps a sharp eye on his debtors."

"Debtors!" said Edgar. "I look upon him as a banker."

Job laughed.

"I'm afraid our deposits," said he, "hardly entitle us to call him by that title."

"You said just now," replied Edgar, "that he would not lend to persons of Friday's stamp."

"Certainly I did."

"And why not?—because he is worth nothing?"

"Exactly!" said Job, exulting at the success which he appeared to be achieving.

"But he knows that you and I are worth property."

"He knows we shall be; but I have steered clear of the fellow's interference by raising money upon my reversionary interest."

"And I could do the same," said Edgar, "and pay him at once, and I will."

"You are too hasty, Hindly. One hardly dares offer you the least bit of advice before—"

"Nay," said Edgar, "you wrong me. I am not hasty; but what you have done I can do, and it will be much better than reviving these bills."

"I can't say it's so much better," replied Hawkins. "I did it because I wanted a good sum, and the old fellow wanted more tangible security, as he called it, than a mere piece of paper. He said it was time I gave him real security, for I owed him, I think, about fifteen thousand."

Edgar did not start at the sum, for figures had so dwindled in his eyes that the amounts they represented were nothing in appearance to what they were in reality. "Bills" had worked a wonderfal alteration in the value of money during the last twelve months, and he could easily have disposed of more money than Raymond was worth without thinking himself extravagant, or at all in danger of becoming a spendthrift. The truth was, something was wanted to compare money with, in order to restore it to its

proper value in Edgar's estimation. He had been accustomed to write fifty and to receive twenty, with various pieces of jewellery and other trinkets, estimated at twenty more. Then he lived at a dear rate, and everything costing about twice its legitimate value, his ideas of money became very much lower than what they had been some years ago, when he would have thought three or four guineas a very acceptable return for a week's toil.

"I shouldn't be rash, Hindley," resumed Job, "and even if the worst comes to the worst, I certainly should not advise you to do as I did. I mortgaged to this devil because he pressed me for cash. But, in plain truth, it isn't cash he really wants, but security. He would be very glad, I dare say, to merge your present liabilities in a mortgage, and advance you a good sum into the bargain; but don't do it—*don't do it.*"

Although Edgar spoke fluently enough of mortgages and reversions, he hardly knew whether, in point of fact, he had anything to

mortgage, and his ideas of a reversionary interest were very far from correct. He knew he had a legacy in the funds from which he had derived a small income since he attained his majority, and which might have been sufficient for any student of moderate tastes and inexpensive habits. As he had just turned twenty-one, the whole sum was at his disposal; and although this circumstance was not known to himself, it was within the knowledge of his friend Job, whose business it was not only not to conceal what he knew of the matter, but to make it perfectly clear to Edgar's mind that it was so. It required, certainly, a great amount of tact and subtlety to impart the information,—however it must be done. It need hardly be added, that Solomon knew also a great deal more of Edgar's position and circumstances than he knew himself, although he was not so well acquainted with them as Job; for there were little legal points which must have been overlooked by one unversed in the techni-

calities of that mysterious science, of which to know a little is more dangerous than to know nothing. But Job was a deep lawyer in every sense; he might have been a capital finger-post, but the misfortune was that he pointed in two directions at the same time, neither far from right, but both absolutely wrong. His advice was always as nearly sound as advice could be—to be false at the same time; and he was so subtle an arguer that he could enforce it with the authority of apparent reason not only against the ignorance of others, but also in the face of his own convictions. Frequently he referred his schemes to Biblical test, and if they were Bible proof they were perfectly correct: forgery, for instance, was no where forbidden; at all events, there was no such commandment as thou shalt not forge.

"It will be time enough," said Edgar, "to think of mortgaging when I am obliged to."

"Any time will do for me, my dear fellow," said Job. "I have no wish to give you advice—

far from it—far from it—wouldn't insult you, Hindly. Merely say mortgaging is rather expensive, especially where fellows are fastidiously scrupulous about title. The fact is, funded property after all is preferable to land: you can do what you like with that—draw, add to—sell out—anything—no mortgage—no deed—no anything. Hem! This is devilish good wine, Hindly—deal at the old place?"

"The old place. I suppose a fellow can sell out at twenty-one—but there, it's killing the goose for the sake of the eggs."

"Depends upon whether a fellow wants all the eggs at once, or whether he can wait to have them eked out to him one at a time."

"But could I sell out if I wanted to?"

"If you have anything to sell, and the terms of the gift enable you to do so."

"Then I can't," said Hindly. "It's left to me, I think, on condition that I do not sell it."

"Then you can sell," said Job, laughing. "And if it were left to me like that, I would sell

for the sake of showing my contempt of the condition."

"But how is it?" asked Edgar.

"The condition is simply void, that's all. But I must leave you, Hindly—it's late."

Job rose to depart, but the thought suddenly crossed his mind that one of the bills fell due on the morrow, of which fact he thought it prudent to remind his friend.

"Which is that?" asked Edgar.

Job drew out his pocket-book, and, after turning over the leaves in a businesslike manner, said it was the "two thousand;" hastily closing it again, and fastening the clasp, he thrust it into his pocket, shook his friend warmly by the hand, pronounced a blessing which would better have become the lips of Isaac as he parted from his hairy son Esau, and wished him good-night.

Edgar didn't utter a blessing on the bill, but said something indicating a very unchristian sentiment, and for the first time, perhaps, felt uneasy about his circumstances. Job was a good

friend he knew, and probably the conversation had more meaning than his friendship allowed him to impart. He knew that Job stood with him in his difficulties, was involved with him, and perhaps he had received some in timation from Solomon that he did not like to communicate; however, what should he care for? he had his stock which Job said he could sell; and if he could by that means get rid of Solomon, he would take good care to have no more dealings with him. But what was to be done after that? Throw himself upon his father's charity he would not; he would rather shoulder a bricklayer's hod, or sweep a crossing. And his mother must not know of his distress, if distressed he should be, for she had been flattered with the hope that he was doing well—her jewellery must go. America—yes, there was America. He could sell out and leave Solomon in possession of dishonoured bills—necessity would be his apology, it is a stronger law than honesty after all. But yet he should disgrace

the name of Hindly—he should disgrace his mother—he should be unworthy of Lizzy, and she was the strongest link that bound him to his fate; her love pleaded stronger than his high principle. It was with the firm resolution of pursuing an honest path that he retired to his chamber, sick of life's dissipation, and disgusted with the phantoms of its hollow pleasures that flitted around his couch. His mind certainly was excited, but the mist which enveloped it magnified rather than obscured the vivid realities which started up before him. His visions were various and multiform. At one time he saw pleasure in the shape of a butterfly with beautiful transparent wings, tinted with every hue; suddenly it changed into a huge hornet with a large sting, horrible to look at; now he was in a garden where clothes were hanging out to dry, and as he gazed at them they became metamorphosed into bills. Then he thought he saw the devil in the shape of a big £; and then he was at his mother's bedside—her face

was pale, her cheeks hollow; her eyes glared at him, but without a glance of recognition —no kindness, no love there now. Why did she look so? Why did she not stretch out her hand to welcome her son—was it those accursed bills? Had she learnt that he was leading a dissipated life? that he was unworthy the name he bore? that he even contemplated crime itself? Why were those lips not parted with that endearing smile that had ever greeted him in his early days? why were they so rigidly shut, as if sealed together in anger? He tried to call her, but he was dumb. Was he unworthy again to utter that beautiful word? Were they for ever severed? He gazed madly—horror crept through his frame—no greeting! Will she not raise her hand once more to welcome him? He reaches towards it—'tis cold—no welcome there—no motherly grasp, no more embracing—'tis cold and stiff, and the arm is heavy. A thrill of horror runs through his veins, he drops the hand. Almighty Heaven!

she is dead! The tears gush forth, and he awakes, his mind confused with the terrible vision, but he is relieved from its awful agony by the consciousness that it was but the phantom of a diseased imagination.

It was a strange dream, and Edgar could almost have persuaded himself that he had not slept—yet such horrible visions never in the hours of perfect sanity disturb the mind unless in sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN A NEW CHARACTER.

A CAREER of early extravagance generally casts its shadow through the long vista of our future life, and he who, in the outset, spends the energies of youth in heaping obstacles in his path experiences a sad vexation of spirit when his waning manhood is tasked to remove them. But of all the schools where wisdom is taught, in which, save that of experience, is it really learned? Vice is photographed by

novelists in all its attractive shapes, denounced from the pulpit, and punished by the legislature; still, vice reigns triumphant on her gorgeous throne, defying laws and preachers, novelists and moralists. Her sceptre gives pleasure, and her robe, despite the miseries it hides, is beautiful in the extreme; it never waxes old, and its glowing hues never fade. She has a thousand pleasures at her command, and while she can bribe her idolaters, she will never lack idolaters to bribe. She never frowns upon her votaries, and preserves even a placid countenance for her enemies. The very preacher who has just divested himself of his gown dares not indulge a glance at her beauteous form, for fear her bewitching smiles should fascinate him. How, then, is wisdom to be learned?

There was nothing peculiar in the will of Edgar's grandfather; the money was to accumulate till Edgar was twenty-one, and then he was to enjoy the interest. But he had contracted debts before and after he was of age, and double

the amount of the legacy would not have cleared him.

By some means or other Solomon had become aware of the fact that the greater portion of the bills had been drawn during his client's minority, although that was a circumstance which Job had taken care to conceal from him till the last moment. But even such friends as Job and Solomon sometimes fall out, and the matter of dispute between them was simply a refusal on the part of the old man to make any more advances until he had better security. Job was reluctant to give it, for he could not well conceal the circumstance without a considerable change in his father's property; he had none of his own, and therefore must borrow his father's deeds if he yielded.

The money-lender was firm, and threatened proceedings and exposure. Job was equally determined, and communicated to him the startling fact that Edgar was not of age when the principal part of the money was lent. The old man saw his dilemma with rage, and threatened that all

the vengeance which his horse pistol contained should be discharged at the pair of them. But a compromise was effected. Job was to save his friend Edgar's honour and his friend Solomon's money at the same time, and by the same means, namely, by inducing the former to settle up, or to draw a fresh bill for the whole amount due. Solomon preferred the former mode of proceeding, and promised an advance of half if successfully accomplished, at the same time without any intention of keeping his word if he could avoid it. Job, on the other hand, intended to employ some portion of the legacy in taking a mortgage on a small estate in which Edgar had a reversionary interest, then to induce Solomon to take another, and then by the legal system of tacking a third to the first to squeeze the cunning money-lender out of the second. There were legal quicksands to avoid, but Job's patience was equal to his dexterity.

Meanwhile Edgar was tortured with apprehension lest the evil day which Job had warned him

against should come. It was true he had several expedients to resort to; but one would leave him without honour, another without money, and a third without friends. Which should he adopt? The plea of infancy would ruin his character, payment would demolish his grandfather's legacy, and emigration would destroy his prospects. In the midst of his perplexity a letter arrived from Solomon. It was couched in very respectful language, but in a very business-like style, concise, and to the point. Edgar read it, and flung it on the floor, where it was taken up by a kitten, to which it afforded more amusement than it did to Edgar.

"An old wretch!" exclaimed Hindly. "He knows I can't pay him; he must wait."

It was a great trial of moral courage, that letter of Solomon's. Edgar, with all his integrity and high principle, never in his life felt so great an inclination to turn rogue as he did at that moment. "Infancy" would save him, and if Solomon could not wait it *should*. But what would Job think?

Job, he remembered had introduced him to Solomon, and had certainly been a friend to him; he would not like to compromise Job's honour if he had no regard for his own.

It was early in the evening when the letter arrived; he suddenly resolved to seek his confidential adviser, with a view of ascertaining the best course to pursue. So, giving the kitten a buffetting with his handkerchief for the part she had played with the document, he snatched up the tattered letter, and thrusting it into his pocket, hurried off to his friend. Friday opened the door.

"Mr. Hawkins at home?"

"No, sir," said Friday, "but he told me to say if you called that he was at the meetin' for the propergation of the eathern in furrine parts."

"At what?" demanded Edgar.

"At the meetin', sir."

"Meeting! Does Mr. Hawkins attend meetings?"

"Lor bless yer, sir, him and Miss Marther, and Miss Mayery is the werry 'eads on 'em all."

"Miss who?"

"Miss Marther and Miss Mayery, where I used to be."

"But what's their other name?"

"Their t'other name? One on 'em's Grundy —that's Miss Marther; dunnow t'other, for we allus called her by her Chrischine name."

"Then they're not sisters?"

"One on 'em is," said Friday; "but tother one had two farthers."

"And what did you leave for?"

"To come to Mr. Hawkinses."

"And a valuable acquisition you are," said Edgar.

"What did yer say, sir?"

"You're a devilish clever fellow."

Friday grinned with exultation, for it was a new triumph to relate at the "Green Dragon" Tap.

"And how old are these Grundys?" asked Edgar.

"Old, sir? I'sh think one's about two or

three-and-forty, and the t'other about, I'sh think, about forty-two or three."

"Pious, I suppose?"

"Owdacious pierse—prays like anythink."

"I wonder their good example didn't make you better."

"Didn't what, sir?"

"Didn't make you better."

"It couldn't make me no better nor I be; it's a mussy I's so good siderin' I never had no mother and no father."

"No mother or father?"

"Well, I b'lieve how Miss Marther got hold of me was as I comed in a parcel, and she's often said it was a werry good job as I did, an' she often said as how I was some gentleman's son, as sure as eggs."

"You are extremely like one, certainly. So she kept you as a speculation?"

"As a wot, sir?"

"To see if she could make anything of you."

"She said she'd make a man o' me."

"And kept her promise, I see."

"I should ha bin a clergymin, I b'lieve, if she could ha had her way, for she trained me hard for it."

"You say Mr. Hawkins is at the meeting. Where is it?"

"You goes down there; you see where them two lamps hangs?"

"Yes."

"Then, down there, and then to yer left, the fust to yer right and there y'ar'—it's a 'all, sir."

Edgar took the way indicated, and arrived at the building in which the meeting was held just as Mr. Hawkins was in the midst of a very eloquent appeal to his audience.

There was a deep silence which was only broken by an occasional sniff from Martha, or a prolonged sigh from Mary, whom it was easy to distinguish by the prim, upright manner in which they sat in front of the speaker; their eyes in-

tently fixed upon him and their large bonnets forming a kind of canopy, or half-tester, of no contemptible dimensions.

Edgar had never heard his friend address an audience before, and his astonishment at the devoted manner in which he espoused the holy cause may be conceived. Indeed, Job was a speaker of no mean order; there was correctness in his periods and melody in his voice; his gesture was easy and his language choice; nothing of pomposity — nothing of declamation, but all was simple, easy and unaffected; he was a natural and not an artificial speaker, and the manner in which he dilated upon the ignorance of the benighted heathen was worthy of a better heart and a less designing mind. The effect, however, was the same; the tears rolled down the rivulets of Martha's cheeks, and the soft breezes of Mary's sighing fully justified the expression which Job applied to them after it was all over, that there had been much wind and rain.

The plates went round, and the dropping of

the silver made a very agreeable sound to the ears of the champions of the cause; Martha and Mary deposited their mites as they called them, though neither of the fair givers was a widow; and it is only just to add that, in spite of a great deal of fanatical zeal, with which they consoled themselves by terming religion, and a great deal of over painstaking righteousness which almost approached hypocrisy, they certainly invested their little savings with a spirit which was almost worthy of being called charitable.

A vote of thanks to the chairman, Mr. Hawkins, followed with a well-earned eulogy on his address, and the meeting separated; Job, after introducing his friend Edgar to the Grundys, acccompanying them home.

One would have imagined as the party sat down to tea that they had been to a funeral—the ladies sighed so frequently. Job wore a calm, and even solemn aspect, in keeping with the company and the occasion, and Edgar looked demure as he cursed in his heart the infernal bills.

The night air was chilly and Job and his friend had some distance to go. The conversation, chiefly on religious topics, had been prolonged to a late hour, and Martha persuaded the young champion of the heathen that a glass of brandy would not hurt him. Job was afraid, so unaccustomed was he to touch anything but toast and water, and very frequently the toast made the water too strong for him; but as Martha was so pressing he would just try a little diluted with some hot water and a small lump of sugar; Mr. Hindly would do the same. Perhaps he would mix it himself, yes he would—there, just the veriest drop—so—ho—that would do; Martha didn't see how much. Edgar tried about the same dose. Where did Martha buy her brandy? Who was her wine merchant? She had none; she merely kept it in the house in case of illness.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE BRINK.

"Well, Hindly," said Job, taking the arm of his disconsolate friend, "how did you find me out?"

"That youth—what do you call him?"

"Friday. O, to be sure, I left word. I suppose you were surprised to find me on the platform?"

"And more surprised to hear your speech," said Edgar.

Job smiled. "You see I go in for anything, Hindly. What do you think of the Grundys?"

"They seem very good persons," answered Edgar.

"They are the strangest compound of piety and humbug I ever knew," said Job.

"Hypocrites?"

"Not exactly hypocrites; I believe they are sincere enough with regard to religious matters, but, like too many, are fond of an ostentatious display of their piety. They give of their means, but take good care that the plate rings of the metal they fling into it. If a society or an individual wants their charity it has only to be intimated to the Grundys that the list will be published. As annual subscribers they appear in the reports of several of the best institutions."

"They do good at all events," said Edgar.

"They do good it is true, but it's humbug after all; vanity and not charity, is at the bottom of it."

"Nay," said Edgar, "there may be both."

"Well, it may be. It may spring from the purest motives, but I have seen so much of this charitable display that I mistrust the sincerity of the advertising giver."

"But it does as much good, proceed from whatever cause it may," said Edgar. "However, you seem on pretty friendly terms with them."

"I have my part to play," said Job. "I got acquainted with them through Friday, which led to a little professional business, that's all. They are perpetually inviting me to these meetings, and I go sometimes, really for the sake of obliging them; but it's expensive work."

"Do you give?"

"Of course. Whether I have the money or have to borrow it, I must give."

"I should cut it," said Edgar.

"Hem! It would be better; but perhaps it's as well as it is—may eventually do good. By the way, I suppose you have heard from Solomon?"

"Yes," said Hindly, "that is what I wanted to see you about."

"I thought you had from your manner; wants the cash, of course?"

"He intimates as much, but I can't do it; he must renew."

"He's a crafty devil," said Job.

"Crafty as he is," replied Edgar, "I have the means of evading him."

"Well, so far as that goes," said Job, "I suppose you have, but I should hardly think it worth your while to stake your character by pleading infancy. In fact, I have gone so far as to pledge my word with him that if you do that *I* will be responsible. That is, I will give him the deeds of an estate which my father has promised to convey to me. Not, mind, my dear Hindly, that ever I entertained such a thought for a moment; I knew you better than that, but he had a suspicion that you were not of age, and questioned me rather closely upon it."

"Thanks," said Edgar, feeling at the same

time very keenly the sting which was concealed in his friend's language, but perceiving nothing of that subtlety which had so opportunely prompted it; for the first time perhaps in his life he felt shame. Shame that he should have betrayed the slightest intention of playing the rogue, and especially to one who, he had every reason to believe, had based his friendship upon his high principle and integrity. So deceptive, and so blind, is human nature.

It takes a long acquaintance with the world to discover its many windings. The reader, who has been made somewhat acquainted with the character of Job, can hardly conceive of the living imposition that he really was; even Solomon, whose acute eye would generally discern the least trace of dishonesty in an instant, was equally blind as Edgar to the deception of that consummate master of imposture. He could discover no trace of dishonesty, because Job was too careful to exhibit any. In all his dealings with the men with whom he came in

contact, he was respected as a pattern of honour and uprightness; if he was a hypocrite, he was one of such perfection that no one perceived it; he was never heard to ridicule religion secretly while in public he professed it; his private and his public character were consistent, and no one ever heard him utter a sentiment privately which he would have been ashamed openly to avow. It was not for him, therefore, to approve, or even countenance a scheme such as Edgar's words intimated; and, if the shrewdest observer had studied his physiognomy at the moment when he was uttering one of the greatest falsehoods that ever passed his lips, he would have pronounced him what he seemed, a man of honour, whose keen sensibilities were wounded by the suggestion of a dishonest course. And to speak the truth, even Job himself, in the position of his friend, would have scorned to avail himself of the clumsy subterfuge which the plea of infancy would have afforded, for the evasion of his liabilities; not only his honest

character, but his interests would have been compromised: in point of fact, it would, have been more advantageous to him to pay the bills twice over than, at the outset of life, to declare openly that he was a rogue and a villain. No, his part must be played with the most perfect skill, so that if the world should ever have to pity his misfortunes, it might never censure him for clumsily perpetrated crimes. His skill must be such as would reduce even forgery to a feat of art rather than expose him to the world as a blockhead who mistook his part, and for awhile deceived his audience with a character which even they were shrewd enough to discover. No, Job must be shrewder than his shrewdest spectators; more cunning than the most critical observers of his actions. There may, then, have been something of real disdain in the manner with which he listened to Hindly, but his disdain was hidden beneath the language of disinterested friendship.

"What do you propose to do then?" asked Job.

"I cannot tell, unless I sell out; he seems disinclined to renew."

"Looking at it from a business point of view, we can hardly blame Solomon," said Job; "between ourselves, we may look at the facts for a moment with Solomon's eyes. The old man lends for a certain purpose, that of profit; he has lent to you upon the faith of my introduction; he renews your bills as they become due. There is no offer of payment; he naturally turns to me, and the thought strikes him that you are not of age; if not, there is the bare chance of your doing what hundreds have done before, and leaving him without payment or remedy. It is but natural then, that he should take the course he has adopted."

"But I have no intention to evade payment; I only want him to renew until a more convenient season."

"Solomon has no faith in more convenient seasons, unless he has the very equivalent of payment in his possession. I am taking

this view, my dear fellow, in order to dispossess your mind of any lingering doubt you may have with respect to the consistency of the thing. To me it's a matter of perfect indifference whether you pay, renew, or evade ; that, I believe, you thoroughly understand."

"Then I must sell all I have ; but I do think he has charged me an excessive amount of interest for so short a time. I certainly comforted myself with the idea that he would not press me."

"Make the best bargain with him that you can," said Job ; "you may probably frighten him (if I may use the term) into a compliance with your wishes. That is to say, you may get half the interest cut down."

"Will you accompany me ?"

"I think it were better not, for I have in some measure prepared him for the proposal. When he told me that he intended to call in his money through some apprehension, I at once confirmed his suspicion by telling him that if he were to attempt

to drive too hard a bargain he would in all probability defeat his own purpose. All you have to do is to be firm, tell him your position, and the impossibility of your paying so much, and so on."

The advice sounded well, and Edgar resolved to proceed at once to the house of the Jew. "Whatever you do," added Job, "don't tell him too much; he is shrewd and cunning, and if he has a suspicion that you have any reversionary interest to lay hold of, he may deceive you with a prodigality of friendship, which, like every other extravagance, is to be avoided. I always suspect the man of immoderate kindness. Let me know how you get on."

There was a commotion in Edgar's mind as he wished his friend good night; and, as he threaded his way through the dingy streets towards Whitechapel, the world never seemed so much against him as then; such a feeling of utter desolation of heart, such a sense of isolation he had never before experienced, and he felt that he was about to

cut the only cable that saved him from shipwreck. The last year of his life passed in rapid review before his mind, and for the first time, perhaps, he knew remorse. He had dissipated all that belonged to him, and wasted what he had once depended upon to secure him from poverty. There was a sickness of heart, and a feeling of inexpressible anguish, without that one only solace which can comfort the unfortunate, namely, that the evils they endure are not the result of their own culpability. Edgar was too well aware that all he now lamented, and all the consequences which he might endure, were traceable to his own folly, and chiefly to his want of firmness and resolution. It was in no amiable mood that he lifted the knocker of Solomon's door. His heart heaved as its loud knock resounded through the dismal chambers. He heard a scuffling within, as of the sound of some one hastily retreating, or of something being hurriedly done. And then the old man, hobbling down the passage, with his asthmatical cough, sent a thrill through his veins.

Had he been a prisoner, summoned to receive judgment for his crimes he could not have experienced a more nervous excitement; and yet Edgar was brave, haughty, and of an independent spirit. Strange that he who would not brook the dictation of a father, proud of ancestral honours, and almost aristocratic dignity, should cower before the approach of a being hardly worthy the name of man, and too ignoble in mien, manners, and person, to be worth the expenditure of a single breath of contempt. Yet to him Edgar was come almost as a suppliant for charity—to solicit, at all events, the old man's sympathy, and if possible to win his kindness.

The Jew no sooner heard who it was than the chuckling and hackering as he unbarred the door betrayed his gratification.

"I did not expect you so shoon, share," said he; "indeed I only wrote to you to let you know that I should like to shee you. You shee, I am but a poor man—a vare poor man, and I musht shome-

times have monish to pay my own vay vith. It's only the—. Come in, share."

Edgar seemed to hesitate. The place was far from inviting in appearance, and a strange feeling of dread came over him. The atmosphere seemed tainted with an earthy smell, and the whole scene, as it glimmered upon his vision, down the dingy passage seemed pervaded with horror. The old man repeated his invitation—

"Come in, share, come in; you are velcome."

"Thank you," said Edgar, "I am sure of it; but, perhaps we can settle here what little business I have to transact."

"Not here," said the Jew, "not here."

"You have some one with you," said Edgar.

"Not a shoul—not a shoul, by Abraham," replied the money-lender; "but if you like not to come in," he added, with a whisper, "I can fesh de billsh, and you can give me de monish here; but vhy did you trouble to-night? I wash in no sush hurry as I told Mr. Hawkinsh. But I musht not shtand here, share; my cough—"

The cough put an end to this loquacity, and prevented the explanation which Edgar intended to make, for Solomon drew back into the passage, and as he did so the draught, which the movement occasioned, with a sudden gust from without, blew out the light, and left the passage in total darkness.

"You musht come in now, share. I can't leave the room a moment in thish plashe."

Edgar entered, and the old man barred and chained the door before he attempted to obtain another light. There was no fear in the breast of Edgar, but some feeling akin to presentiment. What it was he could not divine. There was something of shame, certainly, for he felt as if he were linked to ruin. He had a vague apprehension that Solomon was a villain; and the scuffling that he had overheard convinced him that he was not alone. Edgar had no weapon of defence, even if he should be attacked in that strange den. However, he followed, assuming as much indifference, and determining to manifest as little suspicion, as possible.

The old man lit a match at the embers of his grate, and once more the gloom of that horrible dungeon was rendered visible. How much more sombre it looked than when he was last there! and how fiendish the cadaverous jaws of that Jew seemed.

"Well, share, you want the billsh?"

"You must give me a little longer time," said Edgar. "I am not prepared yet with the amount due."

The old man's face assumed an air of savage disappointment. His little blood-shot eyes peered like those of a ferret ready to dart upon its prey. He paused, and seemed to look into, rather than at his victim.

"What do you proposhe to do, share?" he asked, evidently not satisfied with the conclusion to which his survey had led him.

"You must throw off something of the interest," said Edgar; "it is too much."

"Too moush!" exclaimed the old man, with a tone of sudden and vehement anger. "Do you mean to sheat me, share?"

"By no means," said Edgar.

"Then vhy do you ask me to take lessh than ish due to me? I vill take not one farthings lessh than the shum; and—there ish the interesht for the bill thish day, which ish the last of grashe, and I shall expect you will pay me for the dishonoured bill. I mean the lossh of the monish from thish day to the time vhen you pay me."

"I wish you good night," said Edgar. "You shall have your money."

"You must give me your note for it," said Solomon.

"I shall give you no more note than you have," answered Edgar. "If my word of honour is not worth taking—"

"That ish not my businesh way," said the Jew. "You musht give me your handwriting now. Here ish the paper and ink."

"I shall pay you as soon as I have sold out my stock," said Edgar. "If you don't accept my offer, take what the law will give you."

The old man was exasperated with anger and

disappointment, for his avarice led him to suspect that Edgar intended to avail himself of the plea of infancy. He had not the slightest suspicion that Edgar was a minor until he learnt it from Job. Edgar's refusal, therefore, to give him further security confirmed him in the belief that he had been duped, and to such a man nothing save the loss of the money itself could be more maddening.

Edgar, however, was not to be intimidated, for the more the character of the man unfolded itself before him, the more determined he grew to resist all endeavours to compel him to submission.

"You will not give me your note," said he.

"You have already my bills and notes too," answered Edgar. "Too many of them."

"They are not enough," said the Jew. "If they vas written on slishes of your very flesh, you know that they would not be enough in law. I should not have lent one penny if I had known you vas not of age. By Abraham! I would shooner blow out my brainsh than do it."

"You are putting yourself to a great deal of unnecessary trouble," said Edgar. "There is no occasion for any alarm on my account."

"Then vhy not shign thish paper, and give me shecurity for my monish? By heaven! you don't leave thish house till you do."

"Very well," said Edgar. "I advise you, however, to think what you are about to do before you—"

"I don't care for law," said the Jew. "The law vill not give me my rights, but you shall."

"Every farthing," said Edgar, "but do not think to intimidate me. To-morrow I will sign the paper for the whole amount I owe you. I believe Mr. Hawkins has already pledged you his word for my honesty."

The old man was read in human nature, and half his knowledge of character would have sufficed to convince him that he was listening to the words of a man of honour; moreover, another consideration actuated him—Edgar was the heir of a wealthy family. He was in debt, and at

variance with his father; his means, therefore, of support were constrained; he was also profligate, and consequently by far too good a client to lose altogether. With the cunning, therefore, and tact of his class, he instantly smothered his disappointment and suspicions.

"It ish enough," said he. "Mr. Hindly, I take your vord. I believe in you. Forgive my hashte; but I have shuffered such losses that a case like thish, vhich would bring ruin if you deceived me, ish enough to make me mad; but your vords and manner tell me you are a true man. I vill not pressh you."

"You shall have your money," said Edgar, "every penny. It is a bad time to sell, for the funds are low. But the money is yours, not mine. I wish you good night."

The old man conducted him to the door, and in a few moments Edgar was once more in the street, pursuing his way towards his lodgings; cursing bitterly the evil destiny that awaited him, and maddened with the thought

that there was no possibility of retracing his steps. He had spent his years in frivolity, and his money in waste; his education and talents had won him only the applause of his inferiors; and all the latent energies of a well constituted mind had been suffered to die out in a life of inactivity and shame. And what was the world to him now? It had contained objects worth living for; there had been visions of transcendant brilliancy before him in his earlier years, even amid the follies in which he had indulged, and which he had fully resolved to redeem by his later life. Ambition seemed now like a dead infant in its cradle, and he felt like the shipwrecked mariner on a rock, whose struggles and whose fate the world would never know.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN DEEP WATER.

ANOTHER disappointment awaited Edgar. He had hoped his mother would never hear of his misfortunes. No one, perhaps, ever possessed more filial love than he. No mother ever deserved a son's affection more. What was his dismay, then, when he learned that the stock could not be dealt with without *her signature?* Not for the world would he let her know it. But what could be done? Grief, shame, and remose sent their pangs like arrows through his soul.

If he had ever sought to undeceive his parents with regard to his character, no means could have been adopted more certain of the effect. Mature in years, and ripe in judgment, if judgment could ever belong to such as he, there was no longer the excuse of youth or inexperience to be pleaded for his dissipation. The man who would strip himself of his means of support, and fling himself naked upon the thorns of life, to endure the world's contempt, was no longer to be regarded as a man of parts or ambition. Even his mother must change her admiration into contempt, and her love into anger. His father would have a thorough vindication for the act of discarding him. His name would be handed about as the appendage of a vagabond, and his whole character, from its earliest traits to its latest development, would be the completest picture of a profligate that was ever drawn. It would exhibit the worst features of the prodigal son without the repentant spirit which almost beautifies his guilt, and changes

condemnation into love. Edgar, if he had played so well the first scene of the sacred drama, and even if he should be reduced to the hard necessity of enduring the hunger of the second, was yet too proud, to perform the third. He would never return to his father, and admit that he had offended him. He had wronged *himself*, but no one else, and from his own breast he must suffer the pangs of accusation. But his mother must never, never hear of his folly. As God was his maker, that should not be.

Thus his difficulties thickened around him and he was again and again tempted to fly from the troubles he could not avert, or to use the machinery of the law itself to effect a dishonest purpose. It was something to abandon the prospects of life, clouded even as they were, just as he was about to enter upon a new and better career in a new and better character. In a few more terms he would be called to the bar, and probably then a brighter star would dawn upon his path; old associations would be broken up, and life in

its more serious phase would open upon the more experienced period of manhood. Who knew but he might retrieve the past, and redeem all that he had lost? then, again, the difficulty seemed insurmountable, and amid the convulsions of a distracted mind, he reckoned first the value of that little casket of jewellery, then the possibility of another loan from some other money-lender, and last of all the practicability of an expedient which nothing but the desperation of his circumstances could have suggested. His debts must be enormous compared with the amount which the jewellery could supply, and another loan would but still further involve him, till at last, the expedient that seemed the easier to carry out, must be resorted to. But temporary relief twinkled in the dark project with a bewildering beam. Yes, it was by far the easier and better plan; it was a bold project but it would extricate him from difficulties, and even if it were wrong, there was an excuse for it in his circumstances, and once

accomplished he would lay his hand upon his heart and swear to his Maker to lead a life that would redeem the past. Everything should be changed; old scenes forsaken and his profligate acquaintances abandoned. He would change his lodgings.

He passed his hand over his throbbing brow and for awhile seemed lost in thought. In the name of Heaven, think! Think, till the brain returns to its balance! till Reason once more, if only for a little moment, asserts her supremacy. Think, pause, tremble ere you cross the threshold of Guilt. How the brain throbs! How the temples burn! Would to Heaven now the bright visions of thy early years could flit before thy remembrance; that the fair pictures of thy youthful dreams could restore thee once more to consciousness; that the proud and noble spirit could return to thee; that thou wast indeed that Edgar whom those who censured thee admired! But all is gone! One accursed cloud hangs over him, the fear of shame and the dread

of exposure. He snatches a paper from his pocket; it contains the extract from his grandfather's will. He read and re-read it; the words were plain; the funded property was left to Elizabeth Amelia Hindly in trust to apply the interest for the maintenance of Edgar Herbert Hindly till he was twenty-one, and from and after that time in trust to pay the interest to him until she should exercise a power of appointment to the said Edgar Herbert Hindly, absolutely.

"It is true," thought Edgar, "I could sell my interest, but notice would even then have to be given to the trustee, and the amount I should obtain would not pay half my liabilities. No; it must be done! No lawyer in the world, it was true, with the exception of Job could have got him over this legal difficulty. There must be the transfer, and to that it was necessary to obtain his mother's signature. But how should he draw the instrument? He, so unaccustomed to business, so utterly ignorant of Banking and the affairs of the Stock Exchange; this only he

knew, that before he could sell stock it must be standing in his name and not in his mother's. But where was the friend to whom he dared confide such a scheme? There was no villainy in it, it was true; the gravest charge that could be brought against him was that he had sold his own property without his mother's sanction; *crime* there was none, however much of imprudence there was in the course he contemplated. He turned to his small library and studied that night harder than he had ever studied before; and then he drew an instrument such as he conceived would effect his purpose. A slight glance, however, afterwards sufficed to convince him of his folly. It was hardly likely that his mother would write the whole of the formal document, so he postponed that portion of his difficult task for another hand.

The following morning found him at his friend's. Job was taking his morning cigar.

Edgar's haggard face and gloomy brow sufficiently indicated a harassed mind.

"Why what's the matter, Hindly, you look like a bewildered ghost?"

"I have been to old Solomon's," said Edgar.

"Yes, of course, and he wants the money. Exactly as I thought."

"And he shall have it."

"Try a cigar," said Job, "and in Heaven's name don't look so careworn over a few infernal pounds. What will you take, sherry?"

"Thanks; but let's to business. I want a lawyer."

"Here you are," said Job, "the very devil at your service. But let's have a little of that horrible gloom off your brow, first," and Job poked the fire with a vehemence that would almost have verified his assertion, but that his really good natured face forbade the idea of anything but genuine good feeling prompting any of his motives. "Now, my dear fellow, what is it?"

"I find I cannot sell my stock without my mother's signature; she is trustee."

Job drew in his cheeks and opened his eyes in a dreadfully frightened manner as though something else very awful was coming. "Transfer," said he, after he had finished a whistle in imitation of a solemn gust of wind.

"She has also a power of appointment to me," said Edgar.

"The devil she has; and how many more bad things are there attending this blessed legacy? A gift over, I suppose, in case she dosen't see fit to exercise it, and you are a very naughty boy?"

"No gift over," said Edgar.

"That's a little better law," said Job, "what else is there then? How is it worded; in trust to pay you the proceeds, or to—apply the same—for your maintenance, &c., &c.?"

"In trust to apply the interest for maintenance till twenty-one and then—"

"I see," said Job, "and she is of course willing to appoint thinking you a very likely young fellow to take care of it? Of course you haven't introduced her to Master Solomon?

Come, cheer up old fellow, you look as though you'd got the cholera. Are you going to send this thing down, then, to your mamma, as a feeler, to see if it comes back after many days with her signature attached? It will be a very gentle hint, certainly; she must have every confidence in you and must think you have a vast deal of faith in her;" and Job laughed in spite of the serious aspect of his friend.

"Don't laugh at a fellow's dilemma. I know she'll sign it, of course; will you draw the thing?"

"Instrument, you mean," said Job. "What a limb of the law you are. But is it to be by deed?"

"A simple writing under her hand."

"Gregory will do it for you," said Job. "I would rather not, Hindly."

There seemed something strange in Job's manner of refusal, but something still stranger in the fact of it. Could he suspect that Edgar contemplated forging his mother's signature? He made too light of it for such supposition;

why then refuse? He was a friend; had always been kind him; why should he refuse to serve him in difficulty?

"Nay," added Job, assuming an air of more gravity; "I will tell you the reason why I decline doing it. I have introduced you to that old money-monger, and you are disposing of your grandfather's legacy in order to repay him what you have borrowed; if I should appear in the transaction, it will not redound to my honour. I will serve you with my last penny; but I will not aid you in disposing of your birthright. Gregory will do it for you, and it will be ten thousand times better for a stranger than a friend." And Job pushed the decanter towards him, and flung his leg over the arm of his easy-chair.

"Then I'll tell you what it is, Hawkins. I'll shelter myself under the plea of infancy, and let the old wretch go to Halifax."

"Don't be rash, Hindly; the fact is you could *sell* under the will—"

"But that would be worse than all, because I

should then dispose of all I have, and be obliged to cheat Solomon into the bargain."

"Or out of it," said Job.

"You must help me, Hawkins; you can get it done for me—"

"Provided you never mention my connection with the transaction," said Job, "on your honour."

"On my Bible oath," said Edgar.

It was arranged; and under Mr. Hawkins' superintendence, there was not a doubt of its being speedily and legally effected; that is, so far as the document was concerned. And with a strange feeling of relief, Edgar parted from his companion, too blind to see the madness of his project, or the awful danger he was rushing into. Job, on the other hand, was too much a man of the world, and too well versed in the profoundest of sciences not to perceive the whole plot. But it was not for him to hint a suspicion, far less to prophecy its failure. Not naturally of a bad disposition, it was the more strange that he

should see his friend upon the brink of a precipice and not warn him of his danger. Job knew too well that the consequences of this fatal step might be more awful than Edgar contemplated. The one thought that it was a mere breach of confidence between him and his mother; the other must have been aware that it would be nothing less than a forgery upon the Bank of England. This never entered into the consideration of Edgar, for he had studied little of law since the commencement of his wild and profligate career. As he supposed the world to have gone wrong with him, he took the foolish course of going wrong with the world; and at last his follies seemed developing into crime.

CHAPTER XVII.

SELLING THE FUTURE.

Edgar was in his chamber alone, seated at his table; his head rested upon his hand; a letter was before him, written in a neat, ladylike hand. There was a choking sorrow at his heart, and occasionally a tear fell from his eyes. Surely his tears were all spent when he took his last farewell of his best, and almost his only friend. No, he was weeping. He felt ashamed of his weakness; "he had never thought to shed a tear in all his misery;" he had thought that a curse or two would have done—a curse upon his evil fate, his perverse fortunes, his perverser self; but it was scarcely his misfortunes or his unhappy course that had forced those tears from his eyes

—it was the words of sweetest kindness that spoke from a mother's heart in that letter; the characters seemed to writhe, move up and down on the page, and grow misty. It was the thought that he was using that loving letter to effect a bad and criminal object that weighed down his heart. He had been studying the signature, imitating it—twenty, a hundred imitations were around him; but close beside the sheet which contained the autograph, was the fatal document with its *fac simile.* He had been comparing them, and the similarity was almost complete. It was done; he has only to pass the document from his possession into that of the agent, and his crime is accomplished—the last step will have been taken, and the plunge into that dreadful abyss, from which God alone can rescue him, will have been made.

There were many thoughts passing through Edgar's mind as he lay on his bed; considerations of awful moment pressed themselves upon his sleepless brain; but, strange to say, no appre-

hensions of the consequences darkened his prospect. The fatal fascination of crime was upon him; and what troubled him chiefly, was the folly of his previous course, the deception he was practising upon the best of mothers, and the consciousness that all his talents were at last sacrificed to self-indulgence and dissipation. He recalled the period when the spotless canvas of life was spread before him, ready to take the brilliant picture which nature had gifted him to impart to it. His youthful imagination had often depicted scenes of glorious achievements, such as required only perseverance and energy to accomplish. By nature he was endowed with each; but now what a blotch, what a daub was that once fair canvas! The very idealities had vanished; how could it ever recover its pristine brightness? It could not. Despair whispered again and again, "Never!" Those who had envied him would be glad to find themselves mistaken in their estimate of his talents; those who loved him would bestow upon him that worst of

kindness—pity. But reflection brought curses—bitter and heavy curses—curses upon himself, upon his fate, upon the evil genius that had attended his footsteps from his earliest years; and like too many who make shipwreck of their prospects, Edgar reproached fortune instead of himself, forgetting that the breezes would have urged him as powerfully in the right direction as they had in the wrong, if a better pilot had been at the helm.

The morning came, and the business of transferring the stock was in hand. Job had recommended the broker; the funds were low, as they mostly are when you want to sell, as though some great political event had been ordered by providence because you want your money. Job had managed all the legal business with a master's hand, and before night Edgar was in possession of the intelligence that his grandfather's legacy had been disposed of—at least so he and so anyone unlearned in legal matters would have believed; but the facts were simply these:—

The stock left by his grandfather stood in the name of Elizabeth Amelia Hindly. Edgar had forged her signature and sold out; consequently as the Bank, and not his mother was responsible, Edgar was liable at any moment to be apprehended on one of the gravest charges. But detection was baffled, the unhappy young man was in possession of his dangerously acquired gold, and with marvellous apathy, believed himself safe, never dreaming that he had committed a terrible crime. But his difficulties were not over; the money was less than he had anticipated. Solomon's interest upon interest had swollen to an enormous bulk, and a debt of great magnitude was owing. It was now that the evil day appeared in all its horrors. He went with his friend Job to Solomon's, and a strange scene ensued at that little dark office. The money lender greeted his clients with a chuckle, rubbing his long hands, and toying with his asthmatical cough. Job was in his usual frame of mind; but Edgar was in a state bordering on

distraction—he had promised payment without calculating upon the amount of his debts, or the value of the stock.

Solomon spread the bills before him, and taking a sheet of paper, began to put down the amounts. The first item was more than Edgar possessed; his heart sunk, and a half-suppressed curse seemed to stifle him. But the money lender proceeded to dot down the hundreds and hundreds, looking carefully over the different papers, again and again; now altering a five into an eight, now adding a nought, till at last the sum total was made up—eleven thousand, seven hundred and sixty-five pounds, four shillings, and elevenpence.

"That ish the amount," said he; "correct, I bleeve, to a penny."

"If we can believe these infernal figures," said Edgar.

"Bleeve them," replied Solomon, "they are there, sare; and I would shware by the Prophetsh there ish not one penny too mush; indeed, I

never dealt with a client on sush easy termsh before. You have had a good bargain, share, and there ish no other man in London who would advansh such sums on sush a trifling interest; it ought to be more, sir, upon my shoul. Mr. Hawkinsh, you know there ish not so eashy a man in the world as I am; not sho eashy a man with monish."

Job smiled; but it was difficult to understand a smile of Job's. Sometimes it meant acquiescence, sometimes dissent, sometimes doubt.

"Ish that right, Mr. Hawkinsh? Ish that correct?"

"I am not here to determine differences," said Job; "and I imagine, at this stage of your transactions, it is too late to enquire as to the advantages of going to one money lender or another. You must make your own bargain."

"Thank you, sare," said Solomon, in a tone which indicated his approval of the answer. "I tink you will find that right, sare."

Edgar had looked over the figures, but they

seemed to dance upon the paper. Nines and sixes were confounded; and he felt helpless, notwithstanding the awful sacrifice he had made.

"I believe that ish right, sare," repeated Solomon; still no answer was returned. And the Jew glanced over the column again, as if surmising the possibility of a mistake, or that some figure was illegible.

"That ish a five, sare; jest let me mark it a leetle plainer, if you please, sare."

"It's quite plain enough," said Edgar. "I see what it is; but this is a great deal more than I imagined. I have not received so much."

"So mush!" exclaimed the Jew, "but you had the wort, and more in de jewellery."

"You must cut it down," said Edgar.

"By my sowl, I will not cut down," said Solomon; "it is sheap, dirt sheap monish."

"I say you must throw off a great deal," said Edgar, "or I leave you this alternative—I will never pay a farthing."

Solomon glared at him with a fiendish expres-

sion of countenance; his thin, pale lips quivered, and his bony frame seemed convulsed.

"Not pay me—not pay me—then by—"

"Stay," said Job, "anger never settles disputes."

"I will not be sheated," said Solomon, foaming with rage; "I will not be sheated of my monish."

"Nor does my friend wish to cheat; but you must understand that legally you have no claim upon him for a great deal of it; let that have some weight in the settlement of this difficulty."

"You have charged me five hundred per cent.," said Edgar, "and I cannot pay it."

"It ish falsh, sare; I have sharged five per shent, and the rest is for my trouble and the use of the monish, and leetle enough, too, sare,—leetle enough."

"You can afford to throw off something for immediate payment," said Job.

"I will throw off de 'levenpence; not one far-

things more. I will burn the papersh first and hang up on the gallowsh for it."

"You can have no more than I possess," said Edgar; "there are five thousand pounds—take it, and—"

"I vill take it," said Solomon, clutching at the money; "but I vill have more. I vill have all my monish; O, yesh, all my monish."

"I will be answerable for my friend's honour," said Job.

"But vill you be answerable for de monish?—de monish?" asked Solomon.

"Let me have some conversation with you, Hindly. Solomon, we will see you again, presently."

Thus saying, the two friends left the office, after taking an acknowledgment for the amount, and retired to a private room at a neighbouring inn.

Edgar was extremely depressed, and presented a striking contrast to what he had been but two

years ago. Job ordered brandy and water and cigars.

"Come, Hindly, it's no use desponding; let us think what is to be done. Your legacy, you see, has turned out a failure after all."

"I don't care a curse what is done," said Edgar. "I have already paid him more than I owed; let him be content."

"Very well," said Job, "I shall not offer any further advice unless you wish; what do you intend to do? You are in want of cash, I suppose?"

"I will write home for it," said Edgar, inadvertently.

Job smiled. O, how much there was in that smile; it seemed like forked lightning in Edgar's eyes—dazzling, bewildering. Was he suspected? Yes, he must be! He even fancied Solomon himself had suspected him. Fool! fool! O, unutterable fool that he was! And now he had betrayed himself. No, Job doesn't suspect him; if he may believe the tone of his answer.

"Write home!" said Hawkins. "Your

parents will think you have made good use of your legacy, certainly."

"I am mad!" said Edgar.

"You will be to write home."

"Lend me what you can," said Edgar, "in Heaven's name, and let me transport myself out of this accursed place; I cannot endure it longer. As for Solomon, I cannot pay him any more; I haven't a single shilling in the world."

There was something truly pitiable in Edgar's tone and manner; such dejection never manifested itself on the human face; and anyone who had known him a few months before would scarcely have recognised the features of that emaciated countenance.

"If *you* don't pay, I must, that is all," said Job. "I have pledged my word, and my honour is staked upon its fulfilment."

"I have sold my all," said Edgar, "and were my life instead of my honour at stake, I could do no more than I have done. God knows I am ruined!"

"Let us see if we can effect a compromise; let the old man have an offer of half the amount remaining due."

"*How* can I pay it?" asked Edgar.

"You can give him a mortgage on your reversionary interest in Raymond's—it must come to you."

"Let him have what he can get," said Edgar, "I have no more to give him."

"But you must get money, do what you will; if you leave London you cannot live on the air."

"Nor will giving away my future subsistence tend to my present support. I can do no more, Hawkins; to-morrow I leave this damnable scene, and bitter will be my regret I ever—"

"You succumb to difficulties," interrupted Job.

"I succumb to *ruin*," answered Edgar, "and I wish I had never paid him a farthing."

"Then I wish I had never seen you, Hindly. I must pay if you don't."

"You shall not lose by our friendship, if it should ever be in my power to repay you."

"Let us send for Solomon," continued Job, "and make the best bargain with him we can. I will mortgage an estate, if he will take a reasonable sum, and make me a further advance; then if you like to give me what security you can, I will accept it, not by way of recompense, but as an indemnity. I, you know, was of age when you entered into the contracts, when I pledged my honour for their fulfilment; it is therefore just that I should clear up the matter by some means or other."

Edgar felt the honesty of his friend's argument, and saw the necessity of complying—the stern necessity of poverty. Anything which offered him the means of subsistence, and of escaping from his present dilemma, seemed worth embracing, and a sense of impending danger at last alarmed him; the deed undone frequently conceals its danger behind the necessity or ex-

pediency of its performance; but once accomplished, it is stripped of its false colouring, and stands confessed a naked, and a terrible fact. To Edgar it mattered little now at what sacrifice he escaped the toils that were around him. He was a lion in the net, and the services of a mouse would have been grateful to him at such a moment. He consented; Solomon was sent for, and once more the two were engaged in an attempt to settle the matters between them.

Job had cunningly worked round the bastion of his friend's resolution, or, as he termed it, his obstinacy; and having got him to consent to mortgage his interest in Raymond's, it was comparatively easy to obtain for Solomon the advantage of his own position and to drive Edgar at last to the very point against which he had made so resolute a stand.

"Vell," said Solomon, "you have de monish."

"The monish, you old—"

"Stay,' said Job, in a half whisper, "let us take up our position before we begin to attack.

Mr. Solomon, you see our dilemma; my friend has no intention to cheat you of a farthing, and the clearest proof of his honesty may be seen in the fact of his having sold, at an immense sacrifice, his funded property, in order to pay you that which you had really no legal title to demand."

"Holy Father!" said Solomon, "ish that your Christian dealingsh, to sheat a poor old man like me out of his living; who lent you monish, and had not one single profits. I tought your lawsh wash for keeping men honesht, and now I shee dey are to make you roguesh."

"Hold your peace!" exclaimed Edgar, "you infernal Judas!"

"Vat you call me, sare?"

"Will you listen to plain reasoning?" asked Job; "if not, go to the devil! If you are determined to have the law played against you, I can't prevent it. I sent for you, not to quarrel, but to compromise. Will you take two thousand pounds in full of all demands?"

"Two shoushand for five shoushand sheven hundred—by my showl!—by my showl!"

"Will you take it?" asked Job; "if not, I do no more."

"Paid down into my hand—into my hand de monish?"

"I will secure it by mortgaging an estate of mine," said Job.

"It'sh misherable pay—misherable pays for my—"

"It's for you to judge whether it's better than *none*," interrupted Job.

"I'll take it," said Solomon, "trushting to the gentleman's honour to pay vhen he comesh to hish property."

"Now, look," said Job, "Mr. Hindly requires money; you know his character, and his position; he is now of age to act for himself; advance him what he requires on his reversionary interests, and I will prepare a deed to effect the matter between you. Now I want no argument from either side; if the proposition pleases you, adopt

it; if not, I leave you to make what bargain you can, for, by Heaven, I will wash my hands of the transaction."

There was no room for further argument, for Job would listen to none. The old man accepted the proposal, and Edgar thus commenced the process of undermining his future interest in his father's estates. With what persevering energy he prosecuted the work, under the superintendence of Job, whose engineering talents were equal to every difficulty, need not be told. Edgar found it a source of ready cash; and his first qualms of conscience having passed away, he sailed away again on the treacherous flood of debt, unconscious of his danger, and regardless of his former resolutions.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME AGAIN.

How uncertain is the tide of human affairs! The great events of life are usually unexpected. The shadows of doubt are dispelled by the first beam of hope that irradiates the horizon. When fortune shines before us, we seldom look back, and it is only those who have no prospect who turn their faces from the future and gaze in sombre sadness on the past. Then flit the ghosts of our deeds, passing in review upon the shadowy stage of memory, and acting over again the drama of our life; if happiness and pleasure have been ours, they are reproduced upon the heart; if vice and iniquity have darkened our early years, they

hover like clouds upon the conscience, and shade even the brightness of better days.

A month had scarcely elapsed since the events recorded in the last chapter, when Edgar received a letter, informing him that his mother was dangerously ill, and requesting his immediate presence at Raymonds. It was the first communication he had received from his father since he left home; and, written as it was under the most melancholy circumstances, it yet exhibited traces of that cold and haughty dignity which the old man still preserved, and sufficiently manifested the unabated anger which he made no effort to conceal. But Edgar's grief was too deep to admit of any reflection upon his father's harshness. Tears burst from his eyes, and his brain seemed dizzy with excitement. In his thoughtless career, the loss of her, who had ever been his best, and was now his only friend, had never entered his mind, save in that terrible moment when a dream represented her pale corpse to his tortured imagination. There was no time to lose, and wings

themselves would have been too slow to bear him to the bed side of her who desired to see him.

Who could describe the agony of that journey? the mental anguish he endured as he thought of the last three years of his life? He had left home an honest youth, worthy the good opinion which every one entertained of him, and determined to realise the brilliant prospects which all were too happy to predict. His letters to his mother had always inspired her with hope, for vanity no less than love, demanded that neither she nor her friends should have a suspicion of his misfortunes.

What an awful sense of desolation came over him as he approached the house. The old woman at the lodge gate blessed him as she took his hand, but her tears too plainly indicated a heart stricken with grief.

"Master Edgar! O, Master Edgar!"

"What is it, Mowbray? Is my mother worse?"

"She have had a little better night," said Mow-

bray; "but I fear the worst. O, Master Edgar, why did you leave us? There ain't been no happiness since you went away."

"No happiness, Mowbray?"

"It ha' been tears and mourning ever since; your poor mamma's never held up her head since. O, Master Edgar, what we shall lose if she goes, Heaven only knows; but, may be the sight of you will do her good."

"Has she worried herself on my account?"

Mowbray shook her head and lifted her apron to her eyes.

"She have told me more than she could tell to any other living soul; a'most every day she would come and sit in my cottage and tell me her troubles, for you know, sir, I have loved you from a child, and was the first that took you when you came into the world."

"I wish you had strangled me, Mowbray!"

"God bless you," said the old woman, "it's your good feeling; but you need not wish that, neither, Master Edgar, for there were one comfort

which my lady had in all her trouble, and that were that you be doing so well; for we hear sic smart news of you, that the village rings with it, and every one talk o' your cleverness. But, O, my poor lady, I'm afraid she'll never live to hear much more of you, poor dear lady!"

"I shall see you again, Mowbray; good-bye."

"God bless you, my dear master; hurry on, for I believe your very face will save her life."

Edgar proceeded along the avenue which led up to the mansion; but in spite of the hurried pace at which he walked, several interruptions occurred from the greetings of gardeners and labourers, whose well known faces beamed with kind recognition.

Poor Edgar! how much he wished he could deserve all the respect that was paid him! Accursed extravagance and folly that had rendered even kindness unwelcome to him! Worst of all were the words of Mowbray; better would it have been had she told him that he was censured instead of praised; reproached for folly rather than

commended for virtues he had never possessed. He would sooner have heard of his mother's displeasure than have listened to a tale of wasted love. Yes, he would rather have been blotted out of existence than have lived for such a moment as that. But the curses that he heaped upon himself were neither an atonement nor a solace, and were little calculated to prepare him for the melancholy scene to which he was hastening.

His approach was perceived from the windows of the hall, and the door was silently opened. Scarcely a whisper disturbed the deep and awful stillness of the old mansion; solemn countenances met him on every side. The old servants who loved him so well would have pressed forward to greet him, but they were obliged to be silent and content themselves with speechless welcomes.

"The doctor is coming down, sir," whispered the housekeeper; "it will be better, perhaps, to break it out to her that you are here before going up to the room."

It was not the family physician, but he recognised Edgar at once as the son of his patient.

"Mr. Hindly, I presume?"

Edgar bowed.

"How is my mother?"

"I don't like to hold out any hope," said the physician. "There will be a change by midnight; if she survives the turn, she will recover."

"My God!" exclaimed Edgar, grasping the hand of the physician; "can you do nothing for her?"

"All is with Heaven now."

The words sounded ominously.

"Can I see her?" asked Edgar. "Nay, I must."

"Let me prepare her for it first. She has longed so for your arrival that I fear the excitement may be too much. You need some refreshment—calm yourself—and meanwhile I will return to her."

Edgar did indeed require refreshment; his

countenance betokened the extreme agitation of mind which had elicited the doctor's well-timed advice. But as Edgar flung himself into one of the oaken chairs and covered his face with his handkerchief, he felt that the world had no refreshment for him. Grief and remorse were heavy at his heart. Around him were the scenes of his childhood. The dreams of his youth came fresh upon his memory. Before him seemed the mirror of his life, reflecting everything but himself—self alone was changed—changed to another being—his independence of mind was gone—the generous sentiments of his youth belonged to him no more—and the meanest servant of the household was better than he. How familiar were the old library bookshelves; every volume seemed in the place where he had left it, as though it had never been touched. But a heavy gloom pervaded that little room—a shadow rested upon all.

In a few minutes he was beckoned by the doctor, who led the way to his mother's chamber. Silently, with a light step but with a heavy heart,

he followed. As he entered the room his whole frame was convulsed with agony. His mother's eyes seemed to start from their sockets as they caught the features of her son, scarcely less pallid than herself. With a heavy sob Edgar dropped on his knees by her bedside, and cried bitterly as he kissed her pale and sunken cheek. Such a change he had not expected; but the maternal love that had ever beamed in her eyes was still there; sickness threw no shadow over that.

"My boy, my Edgar!" she exclaimed; and a ray of joy lit up her countenance—her wasted hand clung to his, although its grasp was feeble and almost lifeless.

Edgar felt a touch on his shoulder—it was the physician.

"No, no," said Mrs. Hindly, "he must not leave me—Edgar, Edgar!" and she made an effort to detain him, but the unhappy man suffered himself to be led away into an adjoining chamber; his grief had so overpowered him that he was unable to speak or resist.

CHAPTER XIX.

A LONG FAREWELL.

When Edgar returned to his mother's bedside he was more composed. His presence had also produced an effect on her system, that for awhile even surprised the physician, if it did not flatter him with hope.

"You are better, mother!" said Edgar, as he looked fondly into her countenance, which was lit up with a holy and affectionate smile. "I have been watching you while you slept."

"Did I sleep, Edgar? I should not sleep

while my eyes can look on you, for they must soon close. Nay, my boy, you must not hope—there is no hope for me."

"Yes, mother, there is hope. Heaven will not take you from me."

"My only fear was, darling, that I should not see you. How are you getting on?"

Terrible question! Edgar felt that he dared not lie to her who was on the brink of a world where every secret is known; but how should he reply? He could not wound her feelings with a confession that he was not progressing as favorably as her fondness caused her to hope; he could not betray her love by letting his last words to her contain a falsehood.

"I have had many struggles," said he, "but with God's help I shall succeed."

"Bear up, my boy; never mind a struggle. Have you seen your father?"

"Not yet," said Edgar.

"You must try and please him for my sake, Edgar. I must see you reconciled before I go."

"Do not ask me to do what is impossible, mother," said Edgar, "I would tear out my heart for you if you wished it, but root out its affections I cannot."

"But be reconciled to your father and I shall die happy—I must take no sadness to the angels."

"I would forfeit my soul rather than make you unhappy," said he.

"Hush! Edgar; not so lightly of your soul—when you are as near the end as I am you will know its value; learn it before—learn it now from my lips; no others will ever speak to you with more earnestness or half the love. Have you been steady?"

Edgar stood motionless; his eyes swam, and he knew not how to reply.

"Why do you ask me? do you suspect that I have not been?"

"No, Edgar; but I have heard that you are in debt? if so, let me advise you if you cannot comply with your father's wishes, to set apart the interest of your grandfather's legacy until you

are clear; do not part with the principal, for that will serve you if ever misfortune should cast you down; but, Oh, my boy, do not intercept my prayers by a reckless life. I shall soon cease to pray for you unless I may plead for you at the mercy seat in Heaven."

"Oh, my mother, I am unworthy your prayers; unworthy your love."

"The Lord help you, my boy; then it shall be happiness to you to think that your goodness will give another joy to Heaven. Oh, Edgar, I have prayed for you, till my soul seemed to knock at Heaven's gate, and language lost itself in desire; but I know you will think of me—"

"God help me!" said Edgar, "and bless you, my mother; you shall yet live to see your prayers answered."

"No, Edgar, no; I am going from you. Where is your father? I must see you reconciled."

Mrs. Hindly's wishes were conveyed to her husband, who had purposely absented himself during the interview between the mother and son.

"Edgar," said Mrs. Hindly, "we are alone—close the door—here is a ring—take it as my dying gift—and keep it for my sake; keep it as though it possessed a charm; and if you do so it will have a charm; some day you will know. Remember my words; when you look at it remember the giver. Think of this moment—promise me."

"I swear," said Edgar, looking now at the brilliant diamond, and now at the still brighter lustre of his mother's eyes. There seemed a strange religious mystery in her tone, and he felt as if he were in the presence of a superior power—as though an angel were addressing him.

"This key," she continued, after a solemn pause, "is yours; it is the key of my cabinet. When I am gone, open the cabinet, and in a secret drawer under the left shelf you will find a packet sealed with your grandfather's seal—take the packet and preserve it, but refrain from opening it until your marriage. Do I make myself clear?"

"Every word."

"You promise? Let no temptation induce you to break it."

"But if I never marry," said Edgar.

"Give it to her whom you have vowed to make your wife."

"Mother!" exclaimed Edgar.

"Speak, my boy, while you may to me, time closes fast—my hour—my hour—'tis not far off. I see it, the brightest feather on the wing of time. Edgar, be true—true to God and man—and—true—to—woman—"

"Have you learned the reason of my disobeying my father's wishes?"

"It is not for me, Edgar, to reproach you with the past; thank God for sparing me to advise you for the future. If you have wronged anyone make reparation."

"I have wronged only—"

"Edgar!" said Mrs. Hindly, solemnly—

The look and tone checked the rash declaration which he was going to make; but what anguish

wrung his heart as he saw the poor sufferer sink back upon the pillow, gasping for the breath that was passing from her for ever.

"My mother! Oh, my mother!" exclaimed Edgar as, almost choked with grief, he put his arm gently under her head and supported her, while the tears gushed from his eyes.

"Doctor! doctor!" he shouted, "for God's sake, come! Almighty Father, spare her!"

At this moment the physician entered accompanied by Mr. Hindly, who went to the other side of the bed, too much overcome to speak. It was a scene too solemn and too sorrowful to describe; for upon those moments of anguish when we seem to accompany the soul to the portals of eternity; when the world is hidden from our view, and we know only grief, and despair—despair without a gleam of hope, and sorrow without a single solace; when all that we care for in the world is unconscious of affection and regardless of our tears; upon those sacred moments we dare not intrude; it were sacrilege to the

heart, the living temple in which our life's idol is enshrined, and desecration to the dying, whose spirit seems to carry us for awhile upon its mysterious journey, far away from all things worldly. Cut from the moorings of mortality, the soul seems to bear us away into the regions of the interminable future, till the world looks but a little speck, and the infinitude of eternity bursts upon our boundless vision!

The power which had been vouchsafed to Mrs. Hindly was but that fluttering effort which frequently precedes dissolution; that very effort had exhausted her remaining strength; she tried to raise her hand to take that of her husband, but it fell powerless upon her breast; she turned her eyes, with what unutterable anxiety, with what fondness of expression, first to her husband and then to her son; both were speechless, as they looked upon her changing features. And must pride prevail even here? Is it stronger than death? Will not the imploring look of a wife and mother melt those proud hearts to humility?

Edgar, canst thou not read her loving glance, not remember that "she must take no sorrow to the angels?" Make haste, extend the hand as her imploring glances ask you; make haste, be reconciled before she dies!

The nurse was standing near—Edgar's old nurse, Mowbray, who had come down to see the last of her beloved mistress.

"Master Edgar!" she exclaimed, "look; in Heaven's name—it's her last wish."

"What, Mowbray?"

"Your father, your father, my poor dear lad, she wants you to shake hands. Oh, sir—do it, do it—see how her poor soul weeps—its all her grief, poor thing—its all her grief, she told me so."

Edgar looked towards his father, who, with stern countenance, blanched with sorrow, stood opposite, gazing upon the face of her who had been his companion for so many years. One more appeal from the mother's eyes; it was the last! Edgar stretched out his hand to receive his father's. Heaven! could it be! yes! he is as

firm and proud as ever; one glance of almost inhuman contempt darts from his eye, and he turns from the scene—whether overcome with his unrelenting temper, or ashamed of his obstinate pride, he alone could tell.

Edgar took his mother's hand; pale, thin, fleshless, almost cold, and tried to look into her loving eyes, but the tears drowned his vision, his brain grew dizzy, and he fell upon the bedside. When he looked upon her face again, it was fixed, and even the loving eyes at last were closed.

CHAPTER XX.

HEATHMOOR.

On the death of his mother, Edward became entitled to an estate which descended to him from his grandfather. It consisted of an old fashioned country residence, which partook of the double nature of mansion and farm-house; its earlier proprietors having combined the not unusual qualities of the agriculturist and the country gentleman. Its earliest owner had received it by grant from Henry VIII., on the demolition

of the monasteries, and from that time it had remained in the Walter family.

It had been let for a long term, and the lease having expired some few years since, it had remained untenanted, except by the small staff of servants which it was necessary to maintain in order to preserve it from that state of desolation and decay into which uninhabited houses and unused furniture are prone to fall. It was situated in a wild and romantic part of the county, remote from town or village, and surrounded with scenery of wild and rugged grandeur. The fact of its being untenanted for so long a period had rendered it a burden rather than a profit to Mrs. Hindly. In such a locality, for an old mansion to be empty was to be haunted, it being the custom for immortals to inhabit when mortals quit, and every cottage that dotted the wild scenery of that remote district had its legend of Heathmoor Abbey. The ringing of bells was always heard at the hour when ghosts delight in that pastime. This, and a hundred others of the

ordinary kind of spiritual manifestations, it was natural for the ignorant rustics to talk about and believe ; but it was reserved for a half-witted gamekeeper, whose sweetheart had disappeared in a mysterious manner, to invent the peculiar species of ghostly apparition which had obtained for Heathmoor so much notoriety, and which was nothing less wonderful than the appearance of a gigantic bull perched upon the summit of the huge stack of chimneys which rose in the centre of the building; it was said to suddenly vanish, or descend into the "main shaft," which was supposed to lead to a very different furnace from that of the hall of Heathmoor, where the huge fire-place had in bye-gone days consumed the timber tree and the crackling faggot. Whether this peculiar vision was seen more than once by the same person is not known, but it was said that after its first announcement there were many who were favoured with a sight of the remarkable phenomenon. The bull was always of the most gigantic dimensions, but not always of the same shape, and the im-

aginations of the seers had already added to the bovine ghost the head of a very different creature from that of a bull. In close proximity to the garden of the mansion was the ruin of an ancient church, in the vaults of which were said to repose the bones of several personages not unknown in historic annals.

This place, as it was more sacred, was at the same time more awful to the superstitious rustics than any other portion of the demesne. Few would venture into its uncultivated grounds after dusk; and he who would dare to tread its roofless aisles would have been set down either as an unbeliever or a saint. Such was the estate to which Edgar became entitled on his mother's death; but, strange to say, the family deeds were missing. There was nothing to show his title to the property, with the exception of his great-grandfather's will, and even that was a matter of tradition only, for Edgar had made no search for the important document which was to give him the ownership of the estate. The date, and

even the place of his death, were unknown, so that the probability of making out his title was extremely remote. It was true Edgar had always been the reputed heir, and his claim to the successsion had no more been impeached than that of his mother; still that was a long way off from establishing his legal right.

It was shortly after his mother's funeral that Edgar entered the cottage where Mowbray lived. He was taking his farewell of all. His stern and haughty father had not actually expelled him, but his behaviour had plainly indicated that the chasm between them could never again be bridged by paternal affection; however far Edgar's might extend, there was nothing to meet it from the other side, and therefore he resolved to separate himself as widely as possible from him.

Mowbray's tears came as she saw him equipped for his journey.

"Master Edgar!" she exclaimed; "oh! Master Edgar!"

"What, good Mowbray. Come, come, you

must not fret. She's gone, poor soul, to a much better place!"

"Ay, God bless her precious soul," said Mowbray, "this world never knowed a better, nor never will. Poor dear lady; what shall we do now you are gone? I can't get her out of my mind, Master Edgar; my eyes sees her now, as she used to sit in that chair and talk to me about you. It was all her thoughts, for fear you shouldn't do well. And now you are going to run away again. Oh! Master Edgar, don't leave us."

"I must go, Mowbray; there is nothing at the hall to make me like it now, except the remembrance of old days."

"Such days as I shall never see again," said Mowbray, "never."

"Live in hopes, Mowbray."

The old woman shook her head and sobbed.

"Where is Lizzy?" asked Edgar.

"Lizzy! Ain't you forgot that foolish freak, then?"

"Foolish freak, Mowbray?"

"It was all through that," said Mowbray; "it was all through that you went away, and it 'most broke the poor wench's heart; and they told a lot of wicked lies about her after you went."

"Slander!" exclaimed Edgar. "Who was coward enough to do that?"

"I shan't say anything about it," said Mowbray; "it's best to keep peace and quietness."

"Did you hear it?" asked Edgar.

"Sure enough did I, and all the village far and away; it 'ud be funny if I didn't hear what everybody heard."

"Then you know who said it?"

"I won't have nothing to say in it," said Mowbray; "but I do know where it came from. It wasn't from the poorer sort, and it wasn't from anybody who knowed much about her."

"Who was the villain?"

"I daresay you can guess near about," said Mowbray.

"But I won't guess," answered Edgar, with all his former spirit, which, till that moment, had

never returned to him. "I will not guess, I will hear his name."

"No, sir; it won't do for a poor old woman like me, earning my bread of 'em to say anything."

"Was it Walters?" demanded Edgar; "tell me. No harm shall come to you through me."

"No, sir; I know you wouldn't hurt me."

"Enough," said Edgar, "it was he."

"*I* didn't say so," replied Mowbray.

"And where is Lizzy?"

"She was turned away from the cottage soon after you left; for th' old gentleman, you know, is very hasty, and he couldn't a' bear the thought that the poor young woman should be in the way of Miss Lucy; and so fine a lady, sir, is a great thing for a father's heart to be set on."

"And was that the reason of her being turned away?"

"It worn't nothing else," said Mowbray, "although it wur said that he wanted to pull down the cottage, as it wur a eye-sore to the great

house; but I b'leeve it was my lady that was a great deal of it all, for you know she would a' give her right hand a'most to have brought about a wedding between you and her; but I'm saying too much, a good deal, for who knows but what you may have her yet. It's a ill wind, after all, that blows nobody no good."

"And you have known nothing of them since they left?"

"Why, yes, to be sure; they took shelter here a bit, for I couldn't let 'em wander about the fields."

"And what then, Mowbray?"

"They stayed with me till your father found it out, and then he threatened to send me off too. Your poor mother knowed all about it; and it was a good deal that that made the sturbance."

"What disturbance was it?"

"Let bygones be bygones, sir. I hope you've made it up with the Squire?"

"What disturbance was it, Mowbray?"

"Nay, sir; I'll say no more about it, 'cept

that a good many unhappy and lonely days your poor mother spent over it; don't ask me any more about it, please don't."

"And when they left you, didn't they say whither they were going?"

"They asked me where they should go," said Mowbray. "I did my best for the poor old soul; I guv her my few savings what I'd ha put by to bury me with, for I thought the living needed it more'n the dead. But I don't know where they are."

"Take this, Mowbray, and God bless you."

So saying, Edgar pressed a note into her hand and closed it firmly and affectionately,—he felt that his business at Raymonds was done.

"Shan't I see you again?" said Mowbray.

"I hope so, but heaven only knows when and where; before then, however, I shall find Lizzy and her mother. How long is it since she left?"

"It must be two year."

"Has she no relatives, do you think, to whom she would go?"

"None as I ever eeard her name, for she wur a close sort of woman, you know; and wery few could get a word from her about anything. She had a sperit, though, not unlike many a one in better clothes; and when my lady used to look at her as I've ha' seen her sometimes, she wur every bit as proud as she wur herself, and never bent so much as her head when she went by, so much so that her ladyship would say it was all owing to the fancy you had took for her daughter, and so you may be sure such like wouldn't suit a lady like my Lady Walters, and I didn't wonder when I heard of her warning to leave. But to tell you her pride, sir, what do you think she made bold to tell her ladyship soon after the steward had warned her away?"

"I have no idea," said Edgar.

"Well, sir, you must know her ladyship met her and told her, I dare say proud enough, that she must be off the premises by the next day, for she had eeard so much of her daughter that she wur not going to have the place

talked about as a place of bad fame, and this so roused the poor woman's temper that she up an' told her ladyship it wur no more a bad house than my lady's, and then she propesied evil upon my lady just as if she'd been a witch."

"And what did she say?"

"I b'leeve she told my lady she'd live to see her pride come down, that she would be husbandless wirout bein' a widder, a stranger in her own home, I think she said, and homeless under her own roof; that is, that she'd be parted from her husband by law. What do they call it? —vorced, I think."

"That was foolish," said Edgar.

"I fancy, sir, how my lady would look, but she wur a high sperited woman, that wouldn't bear the foot of another upon her, although it wore a golden slipper. But I used to think as the old woman's mind wur a little shaky like, for she would talk to me in such a awful manner that I could hardly make out what she meant; and poor

Lizzy thought the same, but she wur too sad to notice much."

"Did she ever speak of me, Mowbray?"

"Not a great deal, poor thing; but her art wur nearly broke. I could see that it wur a pity as it ever happened."

"A pity!" said Edgar.

"Ha, sir; there's no good of these ere runaway matches, I calls 'em, though it aint for me to say it to one like you."

Edgar smiled, for there was a gleam of woman's jealousy in Mowbray's eyes, and he felt that Rumour's tongue had been busy with Lizzy's name on account of his attachment to her; a fact of itself natural enough to those people, who look with a suspicious eye on such engagements; but to Edgar, who knew the girl's character, it was marvellous that a breath of evil should damp the lustre of her character, which seemed to reflect all that was heavenly and pure; to him she was perfection, and he little thought

that the admiration with which he regarded her would be sufficient to awaken the suspicions of those who envied her.

"Good-bye, Mowbray," said Edgar, taking her hand.

"Heaven bless you, sir; heaven bless you, and thank you—thank you for this."

Edgar turned away and was soon in the high road leading to the village inn.

CHAPTER XXI.

AMONGST THE GIPSIES.

The nearest stage to Heathmoor Abbey was several miles distant from Raymonds; and after enquiring the way, Edgar set out with his knapsack slung over his shoulder. An hour's brisk walking brought him on to a wild and desolate common, which was many miles in extent; the ground was picturesque and romantic in the extreme; heavy masses of furze and brushwood coated the undulating ground on the left, while in front and extending far away to the right,

was a somewhat hilly tract of country, thickly studded with beech copses and plantations of fir, broken only here and there by a few acres that seemed either to have been cleared at a remote date fcr the purposes of cultivation, or to have been neglected by nature in her capricious mode of scattering her seed; the stony and black earth, varied only by stunted herbage, presented a singularly sombre contrast to the rich luxuriance of the neighbouring scenery.

The clouds had gathered thickly around as if from every quarter, and lent their gloom to the evening shadows which were fast closing upon this desolate region. There were several miles yet to be traversed, and the way was devious and uncertain. Edgar was little subject to apprehensions of danger, and, certainly was free from nervousness on this occasion; for, to that place, least of all, would it be likely that those who live by despoiling others, would resort for the practice of their unlawful deeds. The days of Turpin and King were past; and the followers of their pro-

fession were not now to be found on the highways and byways of desolate regions like that. Edgar, therefore, fearlessly, and with amended speed, pushed on. The occasional glimpses of the moon afforded some relief to the dismal solemnity of the scene by which he was surrounded, and faintly lighted a breadth of the dreary landscape, which seemed of almost interminable extent.

The recent scenes of Edgar's life flitted before his mind, and in such a situation it wanted little imagination to conjure up a thousand images, which, like the dreams of night, took the shape, distorted though it was, of preceding events. But images were confused; the past was a series of wonderful visions that seemed rather the creations of fancy than realities. What line of conduct to pursue it was impossible to conceive; he was already in debt, and had contracted a heavy mortgage upon his reversionary interest in Raymonds, while the estate to which he was now proceeding, was more likely to involve him in

difficulties than to relieve him from them. It had kept his mother poor, and it had now found an owner still poorer, whom it was very unlikely to enrich.

It is not extraordinary that the great events of life are often deducible from the most trivial causes, for it is in keeping with the operations of nature herself, whose grandest rivers owe their source to some fissure in the mountain rock, and whose smallest insects are her artificers to build up the fabric of mighty continents.

It is possible that Edgar might have travelled on unseen and umolested, but for the fact of his kindling the temporary blaze of a lucifer for the purpose of lighting a cigar. His way was along a greensward tract which very seldom bore the pressure of a wheel, for even the farmer's waggon was a stranger there, and the most frequent visitor was the rough and rugged vehicle of the gipsy, who found there a safe retreat and abundant game.

Edgar had proceeded but a few steps further

when a low, almost indistinct moan, reached his ear, and sent a thrill through his frame; it apparently proceeded from a child not far from the spot where he stood; as he paused to listen the moon glanced between the swiftly coursing clouds, and he discovered at a few yards distance on his right a deep pit which appeared to have been dug many years ago, but for what purpose it is impossible to say. It was studded here and there with dwarf trees that had sprung up since its excavation. Proceeding cautiously, Edgar followed its rugged and zigzag edge until a sloping descent enabled him to reach the bottom. There was a pool of water under the precipitous bank, and he knew at once that the object of his search was someone who had fallen from the dangerous ledge, and was struggling probably for life, for he heard frequent splashes, and a low gurgling sound, which every moment, became more and more faint. Quickly, but cautiously, he advanced, and the dim light which the pale water reflected, enabled him to discover what at first appeared to

be a bundle of rags; but which, on drawing from the pool, he found to be the body of a child of some five or six years of age. There was a faint gasp as he drew it from the water, and then it lay to all appearance dead. Edgar did his utmost to restore animation, and, by dint of rubbing and chafing the hands, at length succeeded. Divesting it of its wet clothes, he wrapped it in his overcoat, and once more sought the road from which he had deviated on his errand of mercy. Voices, rough and deep, accosted him as he reached the open common with his precious burden.

"Who's here?" demanded one.

"By the Lord it's the bairn, the bairn," exclaimed another; and as he spoke, a young woman, evidently the mother of the little one, rushed forward, and with a wild shriek of joy, snatched the living bundle from Edgar's grasp. "My bairn! my bairn! my blessed, blessed bairn!" she cried; and the tears gushed from her eyes as she folded it to her bosom, and lavished upon it a hundred kisses, fervently, as if the child

had been separated from her as many weeks as it had been hours. The group of men and women gathered closely round, anxiously stooping to assure themselves that the object of their solicitude was really alive.

"Naked!" said one, "naked!"

"Where wur un?" asked another.

"Who found un?" demanded a third; and thus for some time questions thick and fast followed upon each other, especially from the fresh comers, all of whom asked the same, without knowing from what quarter an answer was to come; for Edgar had not attempted to interrupt the outburst of their wild joy by offering any explanation.

Such a din of tongues was scarcely ever heard since the confusion of Babel—exclamations of joy, ejaculations of sympathy, and doleful expressions of tenderness resounded on all sides; and it is probable that Edgar would have left the company in ignorance of the facts of the case, but that he was not certain of the exact route he

should pursue, since the night had deepened into a thick gloom, and it was impossible to tell either the direction of Heathmoor, or the distance, without obtaining information from those to whom he had thus fortunately rendered so much service.

"You're a traveller, yer honor?" said the foremost of the group, whose visage was almost of the same complexion as the night, and whose stalwart form stood well nigh a foot above the rest of the company.

"I am," said Edgar.

"An it be a wild journey you're on," said another.

"And a long 'un," added a third, "if yer honor stops at the next house."

"How far may that be?" said Edgar.

"How fur?" repeated the second speaker, "why a good ten mile an more."

"Can you do it in ten, Toby?" said the third.

"Thereabouts," answered Toby.

"Why it's nine mile to the white stone on the ill at the turnpike."

"But that ain't the nearest cut, Sim," answered Toby, "if yer goes by the marsh—"

"How the d—l's a stranger to go by the marsh at this ere time o' night?" asked Sim.

"You're a precious long way," said the tall gipsey, "and erout someun to show yer you'll 'ave to doss on the 'eath; howsever, I'm your man, to do you a good turn, for you've done me one that's worth my life—I'm your man, your honor."

Edgar looked, as well as the darkness of the night permitted, into the swarthy countenance of the man whose friendly offers, under other circumstances, he might have listened to with very different feelings; but he could scarcely think that, rough as he was, he would attempt violence to one who had preserved the life of his child.

"Thank you," said he, "but it will be taking

you too far. If you could direct me into a road, I think I should find my way."

"But it ain't that, sir; it ain't that; I wouldn't like yer to come to no harm like. Bill, we'll go wi'em."

"Ay," said Bill, knocking out the ashes of a short pipe into the palm of his hand, and preparing to re-fill it.

"Your way, sir, is handy our camp," said the woman, who was closely pressing her child to her bosom, still wrapped in the overcoat which Edgar had thrown around it. "If your honor will not mind I'll take the bairn in the coat till we get there; and then Heaven bless yer honor for yer goodness. It's a blessed mercy, sir, saving my poor bairn!"

Edgar assented, and the party moved on in a careless, straggling manner, by twos and threes, talking, or rather gabbling in an incomprehensible jargon; some exclaiming still upon "the blessed mercy," others interspersing their dislogue with tremendous oaths, which were about

the most intelligible words of their dialect; others smoked in silence, with their hands thrust into the capacious pockets of their corduroy breeches or fustian jackets; while others, of the more juvenile part of the assembly, practised the useful art of whip popping, so as to be in good form for the next horse fair.

The whole of this group had found its way to the spot in consequence of the lucifer which Edgar had struck; a lighted match having been the signal agreed upon by the party in case either met with the missing child; the gipsy tribe not being in the habit of bawling about commons and parks, however urgent the necessity of communicating with each other during their nocturnal expeditions.

The encampment, for such it might properly be called, was situated, so far as the night enabled one to see, in a deep valley, almost worthy the name of a ravine. And, however picturesque it might appear to a romantic mind from a distance, or however fascinating might be

its effect when brightened with the lustre of a novelist's fancy, if any reveller in gipsy romance had approached the actual scene which broke upon Edgar's gaze, he would have contemplated the reality with very different feelings from those with which he perused the description of such a scene by his favourite novelist.

The tents were disposed in such a manner as to ward off the north wind, and prevent, as far as was practicable, the gleam of their night-fires from betraying their locality. They formed a sort of irregular semicircle, the spaces between the arched canvass being occupied by the clumsily constructed carts and rude vans. The grim figures of three or four wretched horses, whose demure and skeleton-like appearance induced the belief that they had been ransomed from the knacker's yard, were standing with hanging heads at no great distance from the tabernacles of their owners; while here and there a donkey in better spirits and apparently contented with its lot, was busily occupied in cropping the scanty herbage which

the common afforded. In preparation for a fall of snow, which had indeed already commenced, the inhabitants of these flimsy dwellings had spread some tattered blankets from several tents so as to form a kind of slanting wall, which offered the smallest resistance to the wind, and at the same time screened the inmates from the rain and snow with which it was occasionally accompanied.

Men and women, in promiscuous groups, were huddled round the blaze of the several fires, which crackled and roared beneath the pots that were suspended from the tripods. The countenance of every individual of that assembly was stamped with the unmistakable lineaments of villany. If degrees of comparison could be used with reference to them, the females were far more demoniacal and weird in appearance than the men. The sable hair hung dishevelled and tangled about their necks, and clustered upon their foreheads in heaps, as though it had been *littered down* with a pitchfork; in some cases it was

matted, as if it had previously done duty in a mattress. There was, it is true, the dark, lustrous eye, which has elicited so much admiration from the poet, but its lustre was like that of cold steel, and induced the apprehension that a look of tenderness had never beamed from it. Some of the younger persons of the group were squatting between the knees of the men, or involved in the tattered garments of the women. The more advanced youth were yet absent on matters of purveyance, or, in plain language, hunting up the neighbouring preserves in search of to-morrow's supper. This suspicion was soon verified, for first one and then another might be seen skulking behind the different vans, cognizant that a stranger's presence rendered necessary the exercise of that craftiness in which they were so well practised.

There was little disturbance occasioned in the camp by the arrival of the woman who bore the child—a rough salutation or two, with an inquiry, "Where wur ur?" being almost the only de-

monstrations of welcome which the mother received. There was, however, much more manifestation of surprise as the swarthy groups caught sight of Edgar, who stood at some little distance contemplating the scene with something of curiosity, but little of that appreciation of the romantic which others might have felt under the circumstances.

"Who ha' yer got? who ha' yer got?" demanded the oldest and ugliest woman of the company, in a tone that sounded like authority.

No one offering any answer, the interrogation was repeated more sternly.

"It's the genleman wot found the bairn," said the tall gipsy.

"It's a strange country for a lone traveller without a saddle," said the woman. "Ye're welcome," she added, turning her dark eyes upon Edgar.

"Thank you," said he, "I must go on my journey, for these good men tell me that it's a long way I have before me."

"It's a long way to the Talbot, if that's your beat," answered the woman, "and unless ye've a pretty smart ken o' the country, I wouldn't gie ye a whistle for yer journey."

"Me and Bill's going wi the genleman till we makes the turnpike: but we'll ha' a sup fust and then on the way. It's poor tramping wi' a bad stomach."

"Yer know it's a rough style o' cookery that we has here; but if a long journey can make up for a rough meal, ye're welcome as the day The grub, I'll warrant ye, is none o' the worst flavour for its rough getting, neither."

Edgar felt little inclined to partake of the rough hospitalities offered to him, but at the same time he felt that it would not become his situation to discover any appearance of disgust. Moreover, the odour which ascended from the cauldron was far less displeasing than the manner of cooking might have led him to anticipate. His long journey had sharpened his appetite, and

he knew that those who dine in the wilderness must not be particularly fastidious.

"Thank you," said he, "I should be loth to refuse your good offer, even were I not as hungry as a fifteen miles' walk could make me."

"There's a place to set, sir," said Bill, producing a three-legged stool, and placing it in front of the party. "It ain't got no easy back to it, like yer're used to, I dissay; but we lives by natur like—is bleeged to set hard, an' live hard, and I was going to say die hard; but that ain't allays the case, for rough livin' makes smooth dyin'—so they says, howsomever. This ere's the genleman's world; the next one's the poor man's, they says—"

"Hold your tongue," said the old woman, "yer always prating in that fashion about the gentels; hold up the platter, and serve the genleman fust, cordin' to good manners."

"Shall I hold your bag," asked an urchin of about ten years old, seeing it somewhat in Edgar's way, as he reached forward to receive

the smoking dish of pheasant and partridge, which, together with some potatoes and other vegetables, formed by no means an unpleasant stew.

The question was answered by a sharp, back-handed cuff from the tall gipsy, which sent him reeling over the outstretched limbs of two or three of the half naked boys and girls, who set up a boisterous laugh at the manner in which their kinsman's politeness had been re-rewarded.

"*Now* what's I done?" said the latter, skulking away, and lowering, with a saucy look at the gipsy who had inflicted the chastisement.

Edgar had a fair opportunity of observing the various countenances by which he was surrounded, for every one was turned full upon him, as though he was some extraordinary being, whom they had heard of, but never seen before; and if he had ever fostered any feeling of pity for the outcast tribe who make their bed in the desert, all sympathy for them was now dispelled. There were faces as

joyous among the younger groups as ever beamed among the highest circles, and though their pleasures were rough, they were none the less enjoyable. This one lesson he learned from the dirty tribe—that happiness, content, pleasure, or whatever you may call it, depends not so much upon what the world makes us, as it does upon what we make the world. The most polished surface is tarnished with a breath, while the roughly used steel gets brighter as it wears. The excessive refinements of life may have pleasures more exquisite to the finer taste, but the ruder enjoyments are probably the more durable, and the less likely to be affected by external influences.

Among a class of persons such as those by whom Edgar was surrounded, whose habits had taught them reserve and secrecy, and whose habitual defiance of law had rendered them justly apprehensive that mankind were by no means disposed to befriend them, it was hardly likely that the conversation would be of a character worthy of detail. It chiefly related to the food they were

discussing, and the journey upon which they were about to start. Edgar thanked them, and dropping a sovereign into the hand of the woman alluded to, took his leave, in company with his unprepossessing guides. In spite of their apparent gratitude and hospitality, he felt that a well-dressed stranger, with a respectable travelling bag, upon a lonely common of several miles extent, might be too great a temptation to the bold men, whose notions of honesty were of a very vague kind, and whose ideas of the rights of man were only limited by their means of acquisition.

END OF VOL. I.

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